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CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE HISTORY OF THE HINDU DRAMA :

ITS ORIGIN, DEVELOPMENT AND DIFFUSION

By

MANOMOHAN GHOSH, M.A., PH.D. (Cal.)

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FIRMA K. L. MUKHOPADHYAY

6/1A, BANCHHARAM AKRUR LANE

CALCUTTA-12 (INDIA).

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TO

S. RADHAKRISHNAN

WITH THE AUTHOR'S

ADMIRATION AND HOMAGE

PREFACE

The articles presented in this brochure, as will be evident to readers, seek among other things to deal with some important problems without a proper study of which no very satisfactory history of ancient Indian drama can be written. There are other problems too, which need such attention, and I hope to take them up in near future. In the meantime I may place these before the readers who are interested in the origin, development and diffusion of the ancient Indian drama over various countries of Asia. All these articles except the fourth and the last ones were issued before in an edition of one hundred copies and may be said to have been well-received. This is the reason for bringing out a revised and enlarged second edition of the same. As these articles were written in different times with a view to publication in different journals there are in them some repetition. For obvious reasons these have been allowed to stand. I may hope that readers will look indulgently at this.

Phnom Penh (Cambodia).

MANOMOHAN GHOSH

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Origin of the Hindu Drama

1 *The General Character of the Problem*

Different scholars have tried to study the very complicated problem of origin of the Hindu drama in the light of data which may be grouped under the following heads: the dialogue hymns of the Vedas, the Vedic ritual, the ancient literature other than the Vedas, the religious aspect of drama, its secular aspect, the possible foreign influence on it, and the evidence of Prakrit.[1] Discussions which resulted from these various data, in spite of their bewildering and confusing appearance, seem to be very suggestive, and may ultimately prove helpful for the solution of this intricate problem. But the chief drawback of the opinions and theories advanced on the subject appear to be that these pay more attention to details than to the general aspects of the problem, which may be summed up in the two following broad questions:

(1) *Was the origin of the ancient Indian drama religious or secular?*

(2) *Were the Indo-Aryans its originators or their predecessors were so?*

Unless these two very fundamental questions are first given some satisfactory answer, it would be futile to expect anything like historical light from the various fragmentary data, one may pick up here and there in literature or in history.

2 *The Religious Origin of Drama*

An approach to the first question may begin with a consideration of the testimony of anthropology which shows that a close relation of dance, song and drama with religious rites, exists among peoples of differnt countries. For example, in Greece and in Mexico we find some dances of religious character to be intimately connected with the

1 A.B. Keith, *Skt. Drama*, Oxford, 1924, pp. 13 ff.

origin of drama.[2] Hence it may be assumed that in India too, religion might have played a part in the origin of this art. The Kātyāyana Śrautasūtra (21.3.11),[3] compiled probably about 600 B.C., seems to give support to this assumption. From this work, we learn that dance, song and instrumental music were prescribed in connection with the *pitṛmedha* rites, and dance only was prescribed for the *atirātra* and *sattrāyaṇa* sacrifices. As dance, song and instrumental music are the three most essential elements of the Hindu drama, Kātyāyana's testimony seems to be very valuable in this regard. This receives substantial corroboration from a passage in the Nāṭyaśāstra (c. 200 A.C), which is as follows:

The gods are never so pleased on being worshipped with scents and garlands, as they are delighted with the performance of dramas. The man who properly attends the performance of music or dramas, will [after his death] attain the happy and meritorious path in the company of the Brahmanic sages. (XXXVI. 81-82)[4]

And it is due to the religious association of drama that the Indian tradition has given the status of the Veda to the earliest work on the subject, and the Nāṭyaveda is another name for this. Besides this, the Nāṭyaśāstra discusses its own value as follows: —

He who always hears the reading of this (Śāstra) which is auspicious, sportful, originating from Brahman's mouth, very holy, pure, good, destructive of sins, and who puts this into practice, or witnesses the performance [of a drama], will attain the same [blessed] goal which the masters of the Vedic path and the masters of the Vedic lore, the performers of sacrifices or the givers of gifts, will [in the end] attain. (XXXVI. 77-79).[5]

There is besides other evidences (though somewhat late) of a close connection of drama with religion. For example, dramas and dramatic scenes of Kerala, which undoubtedly have their origin in the remote past, are performed exclusively in honour of Bhagavatī, the great

2 *Op. cit.* p. 16.

3 Sten Konow, *Das Indische Drama*, Berlin, 1920. p. 43.

4 See the Translation of the *NŚ.* (vol. II) published by the Asiatic Society in *Bibliotheca Indica.*

5 *Ibid.*

Mother goddess.[6] The Bengali folk-drama called Yātrā owes its name to different *yātrās*[7] or festivals held in honour of Kṛṣṇa (Viṣṇu), a member of the Hindu Trinity. And the Rāmalīlā festival of Northern India[8] which is somewhat akin to a dramatic representation, is celebrated in honour of Rāma, an incarnation of Viṣṇu. The association of Śiva, another member of the Hindu Trinity, with dance and drama, is equally manifest from his epithet of Naṭarāja (the great dancer actor). The *Mahābhārata*[9] mentions the Paśūpati-samāja festival which was held in honour of Śiva, and included drinking, dance and song. According to his devotees, dance and drama propitiate Śiva more than any other form of worship. Brahman, the remaining member of the Hindu Trinity, is also associated with drama, for according to the Nāṭyaśāstra (I) it is this deity that created the Nāṭyaveda or the rules of dramaturgy and histrionics. All these may be said to show more or less conclusively that the Hindu drama is religious in origin. As against this, some scholars however have stressed on the possibility of its secular origin. But their arguments seem to have been very successfully refuted by A.B. Keith.[10] There is still a third view which would see alike matters sacred and secular, connected with the origin of drama. But such a hypothesis is really redundant, for in ancient times any idea of secularism would be almost an improbability, specially when there was any great chance of religious association.

3. *The Pre-Aryan Origin of Drama*

Now we are to enquire whether the Aryans or their predecessors originated the drama. Any attempt to make an answer to this question properly will however take us far afield in a general enquiry into the contribution of different racia elements in building up the Indian culture. It cannot be said that all the different aspects of this vast subject have been studied with the thoroughness and care they deserve, but it may be claimed—thanks to the science of linguistics, archaeology

6 K. R. Pisharoti, Kerala Theatre in the *Annamalai University Journal*, I, 1932, pp. 96-97.

7 Keith, *Skt. Drama*, p. 16.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 42.

9 Vaṅgavāsi ed I, 143. 3.

10 Keith, *Skt. Drama*, pp. 29ff.

and anthropology—that the general lines, which the Indian culture has followed in its development through ages due to an intermixture of ethnic elements possessing diverse behaviour-types i.e. thoughts and habits, have already been discovered. In the light of such a discovery, it is now being increasingly clear, how the Indian culture has evolved "on the basis of other cultures and environments, which existed in the land prior to the advent of the Aryans," and the "art and certain important aspects of the Hindu religion" are definitely to be ascribed to this source.[11] Hence it may be considered quite legitimate to ascribe the origin of the dramatic art to the very old predecessors of the Aryans.

This assumption may be said to receive a strong support from the fact that Śiva who, according to the legend in the Nāṭyaśāstra, plays the most important part in the creation of drama, have been considered to be originally a pre-Aryan deity. Viṣṇu, who also has some intimate connection with the origin of drama, according to the same source, is indeed an Aryan deity by name, but in his Puranic character he is to be sharply distinguished from his Vedic namesake. His association with Pūjā which has rightly been considered a pre-Aryan institution may be said to establish definitely his non-Aryan character.[12] The Pūjā again figuring prominently in the various rites prescribed in connection with the building of a playhouse and with the propitiation of the gods of the stage (NŚ. III) strengthens the assumption about the pre-Aryan origin of drama.

From all the foregoing discussions it seems to be clear that the Hindu drama came out from religious rites associated with some pre-Aryan deity,—Śiva or Viṣṇu.

4. *Drama and Śiva-worship*

Now which of these two deities may be responsible for the origin of drama? It will indeed be very difficult to give anything like a dogmatic answer. For we have no very old data which can help us

11 Suniti Kumar Chatterji, Foundations of Civilization in India in *Het Tijdschrift van het Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunstehen Wetenschappen*, Deel LXVIII (1929), off-print pp. 79, 90.

12 *Ibid.* pp. 82ff.

in this regard and can lead to ascertain the exact role the worshippers of the deity in question played in bringing drama into existence. But if we consider the fact that the essential social and religious institutions of the Hindus, though in somewhat altered forms, are mostly survivals from the hoary antiquity, we come to realise what a strong conservative force is always likely to work in this matter too. Hence it may perhaps be permissible to utilize in this connection the testimony of not a very early work like the Nāṭyaśāstra (I) which gives Śiva the most honourable place in its legend about the creation of drama. The relevant portion of this legend is briefly as follows :—

Brahman who compiled the first treatise on the dramatic art once asked Bharata to prepare for the production of a play named Amṛtamanthana which he (Brahman) composed, and then accompanied by the latter as well as other gods, he went to the Himālaya the abode of Śiva to see this play produced before the latter. Śiva was pleased to see the performance and suggested that the dance which he knew should be added to it. Then Brahman requested him to give instruction to Bharata in this art. Next Śiva called upon Taṇḍu (the eponymous author of the Tāṇḍava dance) to come to Bharata's help. From him Bharata learnt various Karaṇas and Aṅgahāras which are included in the Tāṇḍava dance which Śiva referred to.

The most remarkable feature of the legend, as it appears from the brief *resumé* given above, is that Śiva has been given the most honourable place in it. For, Brahman together with other gods condescends to wait upon Śiva in the latter's own residence, obviously for his approbation of the new dramatic creation as well as for any further instruction that Śiva only was capable of giving for its improvement. The other interesting aspect of the legend is that Viṣṇu, whom we find in later times connected with dramatic performance of some kinds, is conspicuous by his absence in it, though his name occurs later in the Nāṭyaśastra (XXII) in connexion with the origin of the Styles of Procedure (*vṛtti*). Evidently, this second legend was an after-thought, and may be due to Viṣṇu's connection with drama at a later stage. For if he had any original connexion with drama, he might well have appeared in the first legend which also mentions the Styles. Besides this, in comparison with the exalted position of Śiva

in the legend, Brahman occupies rather a position of secondary importance. Even this limited importance has gradually vanished in later times. Brahman was never afterwards shown any honour in connection with drama.

Thus it may be tentatively accepted that Śiva was connected with the origin of drama, and his pre-Aryan descent as well as the later epithet of Naṭarāja strengthens his claim very much in this respect. So far we are on more or less sure ground, but we do not know exactly in which of his two principal aspects Śiva played his part in the creation of drama. Was it his phallic character or his character as the lord of destruction, that Śiva received from his worshippers a ritual dance which in course of time gave rise to drama?

Considering the fact that the phallic dances of Greece and Mexico are held to be intimately connected with the origin of drama,[13] it may be probable that similar has been the case in India too, for Śiva's phallic character is well-known and may indeed go back to a very remote antiquity. A god like Śiva-Paśupati seems to have existed even among the early Indus people, and his phallic connection may also be assumed from the emblems of this kind found in abundance in Harappa and Mohenjo-daro.

In the Ṛgveda we find a class of hostile people designated as *śiśnadevas* or 'worshipper of phallus'. Yāska (circa 600 B.C.) who would like to interpret the term differently need not be taken seriously, for his explanation seems to be fanciful and misleading as in the cases of the numerous other words.

But whatever may be the antiquity of the *phallic* Śiva, no early evidence of his connection with dance or drama is available. The Indus people probably had a phallic deity like Śiva, and from the bronze statuette of a female dancer recovered from the Mohenjo-daro, it appears that they had a dance also; but we have no means of knowing whether these two had any connection, though such a connection does not seem to be altogether an impossibility.

Even in later times we do not find Śiva in his phallic character playing any part in dance or drama. Indeed Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti

13 Keith, *Skt. Drama*, p. 16.

adore Śiva in the beginning of their plays, but the phallic character of the deity is absent there. But even if we possess no clear evidence of the connection of the phallic Śiva with drama and dance, there are facts which may be said to point to the phallic affinity of dance and drama. It is quite possible that due to some obscenity in them, Buddha prohibited the monks to attend song, dance and instrumental music and to witness the *pekkhā* (*prekṣā*) which was nothing but a dramatic representation. It may be that *samāja* mentioned in Aśoka's edict (Rock 1) included such *pekkhās*. Hence for the moral uplift of his subjects this great monarch exhorted them not to witness these. And from a passage in the Nāṭyaśāstra (XXIV. 294-296) which prohibits any kind of obscene representation on the stage, it may be assumed that drama was once associated with obscenity (probably of ritual origin) which required in later times a rule for its abolition. Another fact in this connection may be that in the Pūjā of the Śakti or Durgā, dance and song of an obscene kind were a necessary part.[14] Now this Śakti is the consort of Śiva. It is however not to conclude that Śiva in his phallic character had any connection with the drama in its historical period, though the possibility of such a connection with its origin is not altogether ruled out.

Now we are to consider whether Śiva was connected with the origin of drama as a god of destruction. Of this too, we possess no clear evidence except that Śiva is called Mahākāla, 'the great destroyer' and this for his function as a member of the Hindu Trinity.

But whatever may be his actual character in relation to drama, the pre-Aryan Śiva's connection with the origin of drama seems to rest on more or less solid grounds.

5 *Date of the Rise of Indo-Aryan Drama*

Though we have seen that the origin of the Hindu drama may be dated before Pāṇini when rituals connected with Śiva might have gradually given rise to this art, we do not possess any definite idea about the time when such an event occurred. Some scholars have discovered

14 D. C. Sircar, The Śākta Piṭhas, in *JRASB.*, vol. XIV, no. I, 1948, pp. 105-106.

the beginning of drama in the Vedic age, while others would like to date this much later. Indeed Pāṇini who is now generally believed to have flourished about 500 B.C. mentions the Naṭasūtras which may be taken as manuals of dramaturgy and histrionics. But Weber and, following him, Sten Konow have denied that such may be the case, and they opined that the Naṭasūtras were meant for dancers and pantomimists, though according to Lévi and Hillebrandt these sūtras relate to actors and drama.[15] This latter view seems to be reasonable and is in agreement with what one can deduce from some aspects of the classification of Hindu dramas.

Though none so far seem to have taken notice of this fact, the ten kinds of drama described in the Nāṭyaśāstra (c. 200 A.C) fall into five distinct types which are as follows:

I. *One Act plays in a monologue*, Ex: Bhāna.[16]

II. *One Act plays with one or two characters*, Ex: Vīthī.

III. *One Act plays on different kinds of subject matters and more characters*, Ex: Vyāyoga, Prahasana, and Utsṛṣṭikāṅka.

IV. (a) *Plays with three loosely knit Acts and many characters*, Ex: Samavakāra.

(b) *Plays with four such Acts and many characters*, Ex: Ḍima and Īhāmṛga.

V. *Plays with five to ten well-knit Acts and many characters*, Ex: Nāṭaka and Prakaraṇa.

In spite of their mutual differences, these five types of play seem to be genetically connected with one another, the more elaborate types developing out of the less elaborate ones, and as such they could not have come out all at once.

And it is possible that each of these types took quite a long time to develop and to be followed gradually by more elaborate types which

15 Sten Konow, *op. cit.* p. 2

16 For definitions of this and other types of drama mentioned below see *NŚ.* XX

developed later on. On the basis of this assumption alone, it may be possible to infer that some kind of drama existed long before Pāṇini. Analogy of the development of western drama during modern times may throw some helpful light in this matter, for if we take into consideration the fact that it took nearly four centuries and a half for the Miracle and Mystery plays to develop into full-fledged Shakespearian drama which in its turn had existed for two centuries and a half before Henrik Ibsen could create a new form of plays, it may be assumed that the average time required for the development of one type of play from another may be about three hundred and fifty years. And even if a sufficient allowance is made for the margin of error, this average time may not in any case be less than two centuries and a half. Calculated on this basis, the five different types of plays described in the Nāṭyaśāstra may have taken about not less than twelve hundred years to develop.

Now the first available drama in a finished form of the type V, being written by Aśvaghoṣa probably in the 1st century A.C., the origin of the Indo-Aryan drama may be dated 1100 B.C. Another fact which points to the high antiquity of this drama, appears to be the very prominent position of old Indo-Aryan (Skt) in the dramatic literature. This language seems to have been originally adopted as a *Bühnen-sprache*, because of its being the everyday speech of the people for whom the drama was created. Now there is ample evidence to prove that from about 600 B.C., the old Indo-Aryan already changed distinctly to Middle Indo-Aryan which is another name of Pkt., in a wider sense. Hence the origin of the Indo-Aryan drama probably occurred much before 600 B.C., when Old Indo-Aryan was the only language in constant use among the Aryans. Nothing but this could give such a tremendous force to the convention of using Sanskrit in a drama that it has outlived many centuries. For example, Bhāsa composed two entire dramas (Pañca-rātra and Dūtavākya) in this antiquated language. And the Mahānāṭaka another play not later than the 10th century (and indeed much older) has also been written exclusively in Sanskrit.

6. *Drama and the Epic*

Now after having formed some rough idea about the time when in all likelihood the Indo-Aryan drama arose in connection with religi-

ous ritual, a determination of the forces that might have helped in its development remains to be ascertained. Though it may be assumed that the worshippers of Śiva developed from their ritual song and dance a monologue play possibly in a Non-Aryan language, it is not clear how the speakers of Indo-Aryan adopted this art form and developed it into a drama with two actors.

But from the Ṛgveda we learn that dramatic dialogue was not unknown to the Aryans. The Saṃvāda hymns, for which no ritual use has been prescribed by the tradition, have indeed been taken as a kind of drama by Max Müller and Sylvain Lévi; and Joh. Hertel and L. Von Schroeder have tried to prove that these hymns are really dialogues belonging to some dramatic performance connected with a religious cult.[17] Oldenberg however had a different theory about these hymns. He thought that the oldest form of the epic poetry in India was the Ākhyāna, a tale in a mixture of prose and verse, the speeches of the persons only being in verse, while the events connected with the speeches were narrated in prose. But originally only the verses used to be committed to memory and handed down, while the prose story was left to be narrated by every reciter in his own words.[18] This theory of Oldenberg, though it may not be accepted in its entirety, is very suggestive and may give us a clue as to the relation between the epic and the drama—a relation which has also been suggested by a passage in the Nāṭyaśāstra.[19] The custom of reciting the epics for pious listners is indeed very old. After this recitation was in vogue for some time the reciter gradually took the aid of an actor or actors to represent more vividly the events of the story he was to describe. His method of taking this help was probably as follows: He recited only the most significant portion of a narrative in separate small instalments, and at the intervals of such recitations actors appeared and represented dramatically, through improvised speeches in accompaniment of gestures, the contents of what he uttered. As organised dialogues and co-ordinated scenes were yet to be invented, the reciter had to introduce characters who entered the stage and to point out the link be-

17 M. Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, Calcutta, 1927, vol. I, pp. 100ff.

18 *Ibid.*

19 See the Translation, pp. 4-5.

tween their talks to each other. This form seems to have survived, though in a slightly altered form, in the Aṅkīyā Nāṭ of medieval Assam.[20] It was probably due to his function of supplying on the one hand the connecting link between the different parts of the narrative recited by him, and on the other the relation of the characters who entered the stage, with the narrative in hand, that the reciter was called the *sūtradhāra*[21] or 'one who holds the thread (of the story)'. Another name for *sūtradhāra* was probably *granthika* which meant 'one who works in connexion with a *grantha* (book)' i.e. recites from it.[22] Taken in this sense the passage in which the word occurs will be intelligible. The compiler of the Mbh. it seems, had in view this kind of primitive drama from the epic when he described the work of a *granthika*. But besides this he seems to have known also of the more developed kind of drama. The influence of the epic upon the development of drama also may be said to strengthen the case of its antiquity. The *Mahābhārata* is based on the exploits of the heroes of the battle of Kurukṣetra, which was taken to be an historical event occurring in about the beginning of the first millennium before Christ. The ballads composed about the deeds of the principal heroes, which furnished the nucleus of the epic, were in all likelihood composed shortly after this great event. This would place the beginning of the epic at least in its shorter form, roughly at about the 10th century B.C. We have seen before that the drama of a very crude type arose probably one century earlier.

7. *The Drama and the Ancient Aryan Tribes*

Though the Hindu drama was in all likelihood of pre-Aryan origin the contribution of the Aryan tribes towards its development was perhaps not inconsiderable. The fact that the available dramatic literature is written exclusively in Indo-Aryan (Sanskrit and Prakrit) may

20 See the next article where a specimen of this variety of drama has been given in a slightly abridged translation.

21 A *Śūtradhāra*-like character appears also in the very primitive Ceylonese dance-drama of Indian origin. See M. Ghosh, The Sinhalese Dance and the Indian Nāṭya in *Indo-Asian Culture*, vol. I, (1952) p. 180.

22 Keith, *Skt. Drama*, p. 45.

well be the basis of this assumption. The names of the Styles of Procedure (*Vṛtti*) in producing a play, may also be said to point to some Indo-Aryan tribes which played a prominent part in developing the ancient Indian drama. For example, the Bhāratī Vṛtti seems to have come from the Bharatas, a well-known Indo-Aryan tribe. As the profuse use of Sanskrit is the special characteristic of this style, we may identify these Bharatas with the Vedic tribe of that name. The word 'Bharata' which later came to mean 'an actor' becomes comparable to Māgadha, the usual appellation of 'a bard,' which also came from a tribal name. Of ethnic affiliation to the Sāttvatas who gave the Sāttvatī Style its name, we are not sure. But they too, being associated with the Yadus of the *Mahābhārata*, were perhaps an Indo-Aryan tribe. We do not, however, know of any tribe called 'Arabhaṭa' and 'Keśika' who might have respectively given rise to the Ārabhaṭī and Kaiśikī Styles. It does not seem quite unlikely that these once existed and were later extinct or merged with the other tribes. But in spite of a paucity of direct evidence, our assumption about the tribal contribution towards the development of the Indian drama may not be considered fanciful. For in modern times too, it is found that certain types of plays are originally associated with particular nations. For example, the operas are related to the Italians, Shakespearian comedies and tragedies to the English, and the Ibsenian problem-plays to the Norwegians.

8. *The Lost Dramatic Literature*

But whatever might be the contribution of different Indo-Aryan tribes towards the development of ancient Hindu drama, in the absence of suitable data, its chronology cannot be ascertained. Such data in the shape of a large number of dramatic works may well be taken to have once existed. This will be evident to one who knows the history of the gradual discovery of the extant dramatic literature of the Hindus from the last quarter of the eighteenth century down to our own times. Though the number of plays known by their title are now about 550, Wilson in his work on the Hindu Theatre (1827) could cite only 60 names, while Fitzedward Hall added 20 more to the number in his Introduction to the Daśarūpa (1865). Afterwards Sylvain Lévi gave in his *Le Théâtre indien* (1890) about 375 names in all, while Sten

Konow in his *Das Indische Drama* (1920) and A.B. Keith in his *Sanskrit Drama* (1924) gave 80 more names. To this should be added 91 new plays mentioned by Sāgaranandin, Abhinavagupta, Śāradātanaya and Rāmacandra-Guṇacandra, and the four Bhāṇas published as the *Caturbhāṇī*. And the reason why the dramatic literature of very early times has not come down to us might be as follows:

It is possible that the writing of plays in the pre-historic period of the Hindu drama rested solely with the professional playwrights attached to individual theatrical troupes. The Nāṭyaśāstra indeed mentions such playwrights belonging to theatrical parties.[23] From the difinition of the playwright given there, it appears that his art did not reach the complexity which appeared in ths classical plays of Bhāsa, Kālidāsa etc. It may therefore be permissible to assume that every theatrical party zealously guarded the use of its successful pieces from their rivals. Under these circumstances, plays have little chance of outliving the time of their first production. As the vogue of a particular play changed it came to be altogether lost.

23 *NŚ* Chowkhamba ed. XXXV. 77; Kāvyamālā ed. XXXV. 31.

The Aṅkiyā Nāṭ : Its Origin and Nature

The Aṅkīyā Nāṭ[1] অঙ্কীয়া নাট of Assam represented by works of Śaṅkaradeva (1449-1568) and his followers, is a type of drama which may be easily mistaken for folk-plays of not very early date. But after a careful examination of its different features, it appears to be the relic of a form of drama which in all probability existed in India in the prehistoric period of this art. The similarity of the Aṅkīyā Nāṭ with the classical Skt. drama, as well as its difference from the same, is remarkable, and a study of these may lead to the view suggested above.

As regards its structure, the Aṅkīyā Nāṭ has the following points of similarity with the Skt. dramas: the Nāndī, the Sūtradhāra and the partial use of Skt. Of these the Nāndī (benediction) is in Skt. and is placed in the beginning of the play, and it is after reciting the same that the Sūtradhāra introduces the play proper. But unlike the Sūtradhāra of a Skt. drama, he speaks mostly vernacular.

The differences of the Aṅkīyā Nāṭ with the Skt. dramas, are that every important speech of a character, is followed by a song, and in all cases a play is to consist of one act only. Directions about the entrance and exit of characters in the Aṅkīyā Nāṭ do not occur in the written text of the plays, unless Sūtradhāra's speech announcing these are in some cases to be taken as such. Besides this, the Sūtradhāra in the Aṅkīyā Nāṭ unlike his namesake in the Skt. play, remains on the stage throughout the entire performance, and he not only recites the Nāndī and introduces the play, but also explains every new entrance, first in Skt. verse and then in the vernacular, and this method of speaking both Skt. and vernacular side by side (to express the same thing) is used by him also in narrating the progress of the play.

In the theatrical side also the Aṅkīyā Nāṭ shows some similarity with the Skt. dramas. Music, gestures and dance play a considerable part in both these kinds of play. And the accessories mentioned in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* under the Āhāryābhinaya are used in the performance of the Aṅkīyā Nāṭ as well.

1 অঙ্কীয়া নাট (*Aṅkīyā-nāṭ*) ed. by B. K. Barua, Gauhati, 1940.

To elucidate the points discussed above we give at the end of this essay a slightly abridged annotated translation of Śaṅkaradeva's play named *Rāmavijaya* (Rama's Triumph).

Occasional Skt. verses in this play which the Sūtradhāra recites and which without his vernacular translation the spectators (using the New Indo-Aryan) cannot generally understand, are liable to remain unexplained unless the practice of using such Skt. verses is taken as the relic of an ancient custom which has long outlived its actual significance.

To clarify this point we shall have to digress a little in the field of Vedic studies. We have mentioned before that from the dramatic character of the Saṃvāda hymns for which tradition records no ritual use, Oldenberg thought that they were originally tales in verse and prose mixed together, the speeches of the persons only being in verse while the events connected with the speeches were narrated in prose. But originally, only the verse-portions were committed to memory and handed down, while the prose story was left to be narrated by every reciter in his own words. Now in the dialogue hymns of the *Ṛgveda*, only the verse portions containing conversation have been preserved, while the prose portions have been lost. Oldenberg cited from the ancient literatures numerous parallel cases in support of his theory.

His assumption about the recitation of tales composed in verse and prose mixed together, was supported by Pischel who sought to explain the combination of prose and verse in the Skt. drama as a relic of this early form of literature which thus might serve both epic and dramatic ends. But Oldenberg's theory met with a great deal of opposition from Sylvain Lévi who suggested (in 1890) that the dialogue hymns of the *Ṛgveda* might be a kind of drama.

In this matter he was in a way anticipated (in 1869) by Max Müller who in connection with his version of the *Ṛgveda* (I. 165) conjectured that the dialogues in question were possibly acted by two parties.

This idea was taken up later by J. Hertel and L. von Schroeder who tried to prove that these Saṃvāda hymns are really speeches belonging to some dramatic performances connected with religious cult. "We have only", they say "to supply dramatic action, and the difficulties which these hymns offer to interpretation will disappear. What

kind of action has to be supplied can of course only be gathered from dialogues themselves".

Though the theories mentioned above may or may not explain the nature of the Saṃvāda hymns of the *Ṛgveda*, they may well be said to throw some light on the otherwise obscure question of origin of the ancient Indian drama. Winternitz who has very carefully weighed all these theories, considers these Saṃvāda hymns as "ancient ballads of the same kinds as are found also in the literatures of many other peoples". According to him, "this ancient ballad consists of a narrative and of a dramatic element. The *epic* arose from the narrative and the *drama* from the dramatic elements of the ancient ballad". He further says that ballads of this type, "which treated of one and the same subject were often combined in a cycle. And such cycles of ballads formed nucleus, from which the epic has developed". The theory about the connection of the epic and dramatic poetry seems to receive corroboration from a passage in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* according to which the origin of the *nāṭya* is related to the epic. From all those it may be legitimately surmised that the primitive Indian plays grew up from the recitation of the narrative poetry of epic character.

With the appearance of the actor-dancers to represent the incidents in a story the reciter assumed the character of the Sūtradhāra. In the early times when the Old Indo-Aryan (Skt) was the spoken language, the *Sūtradhāra* not only recited the different parts of the narrative in verse, but he also gave a prose commentary to them; and different characters figuring in the narrative were represented by actors who amplified the narrative mostly by their improvised prose speeches suitable to the occasion.

From such a view it may be permissible to assume that primitive Indian dramas were made up of the following elements:

(a) A narrative in verse was recited in separate instalments by the Sūtradhāra,

(b) and himself following such verses always with a prose explanation.

(c) After each such explanation, there appears and speaks a character who might or might not have been mentioned in the narrative.

(d) Speeches in cases mentioned above were in all likelihood in prose and were sometimes followed by songs and dance.

As may be easily assumed, this primitive form of drama naturally underwent a change, when Old Indo-Aryan (Skt.) changed into Middle Indo-Aryan (Pali-Pkt.) and Sūtradhāra of that age for obvious reasons used in his commentary the current language, i.e. Pkt., and so did the other characters who added improvised prose speeches.

This tradition of use of the current language by the Sūtradhāra and the *dramatis personae* by the side of the Skt. verse, giving the skeleton of the narrative on which the play was based, seems to have survived in the Aṅkīyā Nāṭ.

It is in the light of this theory that the historical sense of the word 'Sūtradhāra' becomes quite clear. For by reciting and commenting on the significant parts of the Skt. verse-narrative and introducing different characters and their acts, speeches and movements he holds the *thread* (the connecting link) *i.e. sūtraṃ dhārayati* and gives unity to all that may otherwise appear to be quite unconnected with one another.

रामविजय [RĀMA'S TRIUMPH][2]

(Benediction)

यन्नामाखिलशोकनाशनं यन्नाम प्रेमास्पदं
पापापारपयोधितारणविधौ यन्नाम पीनप्लवः ।
यन्नामश्रवणात् पुनाति श्वपचः प्राप्नोति मोक्षं क्षितौ
तं श्रीराममहं वन्दे महेशवरदं सदा ॥[3]

(I always adore with devotion Śrī-Rāma who can grant a boon [even] to Maheśa (Śiva), and whose name kills the sorrow of all the worlds, inspires [supreme] love, serves as a broad boat for carrying [*people*] across the limitless ocean of sin, and on reaching the ears of

2 This play except the portions in Sanskrit, as shown in the translation, is written in what may be called an archaic Assamese.

3 Skt. passages were recited by the Sūtradhāra though the text does not always mention this fact.

a Caṇḍāla makes him purified, giving him liberation [even] in this world.)

अपिच— येनाभाजि धनुः शिवस्य सहसा सीता समाश्वासिता
येनाकारि पराभवो भृगुपतेर्वामस्य रामस्य च ।
दैदेह्याः विधिवद् विवाहमकरोत् निर्जित्य यः पार्थिवान्
युष्माकं वितनोतु शं स भगवान् श्रीरामचन्द्रश्चिरम् ॥

[May the Lord Rāmacandra who broke Śiva's bow, and comforted Sitā at once, conquered the hostile [Paraśu]-rāma, the chief of the Bhṛgu clan, and married Sītā duly after conquering the kings, always do you good.]

Song

Victory to Rāma, the life of the world, to him I bow down. By singing the merit of his name the sinner attains the highest region. By remembering him one gets across the fire of wordly existence. On breaking down [Śiva's bow] Ajagava, he won the daughter of Janaka, and pierced all the kings [his rival suitors] with his arrows. So says the servant of Kṛṣṇa.

The Benediction ends.

Sūtradhāra—Enough. Let me bow to Rāmacandra. (*then he addresses the assembly of spectators as follows*):

भोः भोः सामाजिका यूयं शृणुतावहितं बुधाः ।
श्रीरामविजयं नाम नाटकं मोक्षसाधकम् ॥

[Oh the learned members of the assembly, observe carefully this play called "Rāma's Triumph" for it will bring liberation unto you.]

Song

Victory to the jewel of Raghu's race, to the dispeller of the fear of his servants. Victory again to the destroyer of the torments of his own devotees and of the wicked ways of others etc.

Sūtra —O members of the assembly, O honest gentlemen, now enters the stage the highest god Nārāyaṇa who has incarnated himself as Rāma in Daśaratha's house, for relieving the earth of its [sinful] burden. With supreme delight he will dance his marriage and dalliance with Sītā. Please look at him and listen to his words with attention. First to enter will be Rāma with Lakṣmaṇa. Having this news you are to be on the alert. O comrade, what music do I hear?

Comrade—Friend, it is the drum of gods.

Sūtra —The drum of gods indeed. I see, Rāmacandra is coming now.

प्रवेशमकरोत् कामं रामो राजीवलोचनः ।
ससोदरो धनुष्पाणि रूपेणाप्रतिमो भुवि ॥

[(Here) entered indeed the lotus-eyed and the most beautiful Rāma together with his brother, and he carried a bow in his hand.]

Sūtra—O the members of the assembly, here come Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa of whom I spoke.

Song

Here enters Rāma, the great god and the chief of Raghu's race. He is followed by his brother and has a bow and arrow in his hand etc.

Sūtra—Now after this you hear about the entrance of the King Daśaratha.[4]

प्रविवेश महातेजा राजा दशरथस्तदा ।
छत्रचामरसंयुक्तः, धनुष्पाणिर्नृपोत्तमः ॥

[Then entered the mighty Daśaratha the best of the kings with servants bearing his umbrella and the chowri. He carries a bow and arrows in his hands.]

Song

Now comes Daśaratha the lord of the earth, the chowri is waved by his side and the umbrella is

4 In the early NIA dramas characters sometimes announce themselves.

held over his head. He the invincible hero holds the bow and arrows [in his hand], and due to his prowess the hostile kings tremble. He is the father of Rāma the lord of the three worlds, and on seeing him all the sins are scared away.

Sūtra— After entering in this manner the king sits down with great pleasure.

शिष्येण साकम् आगत्य विश्वामित्रो महामुनिः ।
आशीर्वादं ददौ तस्मै राज्ञे मन्त्रमुदीरयन् ॥

[The great sage Viśvāmitra came with his disciples and gave the King Daśaratha his blessings by reciting [proper] Mantras.

Sūtra— Kauśika, the prince of sages who comes with his disciples to bless the King Daśaratha, is saying something. Look and listen.

Song

The impetuous Kauśika comes on purpose with a garland on his head, and a staff in his hand. With the movements of his hands he sings the praise of Hari, and looks around with trembling eyes. A beautiful Tilaka adores his forehead, but he looks like Yama the god of death.

Sūtra —After entering in this manner he gives his blessing to the king.

चिरञ्जीव चिरञ्जीव चिरञ्जीव जनाधिप ।
पुत्रपत्नीसमायुक्तो भक्तिमान् भव माधवे ॥

[Long live, long live, long live, O lord of men, be devoted to Hari along with your son and wife.]

Kauśika—O king Daśaratha. Long live with your family.

Daśaratha—O the prince of sages, my capital Ayodhya has been sanctified today by the touch of your feet. Your appearance here has given my existence its meaning. O sage, what need of you am I to fulfil? Do command me for it. I truly promise in the midst of this assembly to give you today whatever gift you may ask for.

Kauśika—(*with a sly smile at the words of the king*) Ah, my desire has been fulfilled. (*he blesses the king*) Oh king, you are the Wish-yielding tree on this earth. A suppliant never goes disappointed from you. But now hear about my prayer. In my hermitage I have started a sacrifice to which the two Rākṣasas Mārīca and Subāhu are doing damage. I shall be happy if you will send along with me the two princes Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to protect this sacrifice.

तन्निशम्याभवद् भीतः पपात मूर्छितो भुवि ।
करोति कातरं राजा विधृत्य चरणौ मुनेः ॥

[On hearing this he was afraid and fell down unconscious on the earth, and then implored the sage pitifully by holding his two feet in his hand for being excused.]

Sūtra—The king on hearing the sage's words is overcome with dire anxiety, and is deprived of his consciousness. After getting back his senses, he implores the sage pitifully by holding his feet to be excused.

Daśaratha—O great sage, my sons Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are mere boys. Shall I offer them to the Rākṣasas? What kind of act will this be? Sir, you should better take me to protect your sacrifice.

Kauśika—(*in anger*) O the sinner, the speaker of untruth, would you not then send Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa? (*he trembles in anger and is ready to depart*).

Daśaratha—(*comes forward and holds the sage's feet and says plaintively*).

Song

O sage, have mercy on me; make a gift of my son to me. How can I say "Take my son"? Seeing you ask for Rāma to fight the Rākṣasas, my heart bleeds. For Rāma is a boy; he does not know anything. Besides deprived of him I cannot continue to live any longer.

Daśaratha—How shall I deliver Rāma to the Rākṣasas? Father, leave Rāma and take me in his stead.

Kauśika—O Daśaratha, you do not know anything about Rāma's character. I know it through my power of Yoga. This Rāma is the Supreme God and an incarnation of Hari. He will deliver the earth from the torment of the Asuras and the Rākṣasas. Knowing all this you need not be anxious for him. So keep your promise and send Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa along with me.

Sūtra—The king on hearing the sage's words became a little pacified, and gave over Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to the sage's charge. Look now, Kauśika is happy to take along with him the two princes.

Song

Kauśika goes away after the success of his mission, and Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa follow him; the sage gives them the bow and arrows. You will understand this by seeing Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. The sage is anxious to go to his hermitage. On seeing him Tāḍakā obstructs the way.

The Rākṣasī laughs in joy, for she thinks that she has met her food. Kauśika trembles in fear and says, O Rāma, the Rākṣasī will eat me up. On hearing this Rāma takes up his bow and sends off an arrow to strike at her heart. Tāḍakā falls down with a roar which terrifies people like a clap of thunder. On seeing this, Kauśika shouts in joy "well done", "well done".

जयतु जयतु राम प्रार्थकत्राणहेतो
रघुकुलकमलाले सूर्यवंशस्य देव ।
हरति दूरितराजी नामसंकीर्तने यः
स्वजनसुतकलत्रैः जीवतु वै चिरायुः ॥

[Victory to Rāma who is the saviour of the suppliant, the joy of the Raghu's race, the god of the solar line. Let the man who scares away the sins for one's repeating his name, live long together with his sons, wife and kinsmen.]

Kauśika—O Rāmacandra, the exalted scion of Raghu's race, I bless you to live long with your wife and sons. O Rāmacandra, you are a great benefactor of mine. You have made the completion of my sacrifice possible. I cannot praise your merits enough. What good may I do to you in return. (*after some thinking*) I see, there is a suitable occasion just now. O Rāma, Janaka's daughter is at present going to choose her husband. I have come to know that he who can string the bow of Maheśa will be given that princess in marriage. I shall be glad if that blessed maiden of matchless beauty becomes your wife. Through Yogic powers I have come to know that this Sītā during her many former births, practised penance to win you as her husband. Remembering all this, in this birth she is always thinking of you. She is waiting for you with the distressed feeling of a separated lover. I shall now describe that beautiful girl. Listen to it.

Song

How shall I describe the beauty of that maiden, O Rāma. She is like an image made of gold and is matchless in her beauty. A jewelled Tilaka hangs on her forehead, and the curve of her eyebrows charms the three worlds. On seeing her face the moon is ashamed, and the lotus on seeing her eyes enters water (in shame). On watching the beautiful arms the delicate lotus-stalk sinks in watery mud etc.

सीताया रूपलावण्यम् एवं निशम्य राघवः ।
ऋषिमाभाष्य भगवान् जगाम मिथिलां प्रति ॥

[On hearing this about the beauty of Sītā, Rāma spoke to the sage and started for Mithilā]

Sūtra—Hearing at present about Sītā's beauty some change occurs in Rāma's heart. For Sītā he sighs, and speaks to the sage.

Rāma—O great sage, that bow of Maheśa is harder than adamant. How can I have power to put string to it? Still I shall try to obey your command. O dear sage, let us go thither in haste.

Sūtra—After speaking thus, Rāma with his younger brother is going after the sage. Look and listen.

Song

Rāma starts for Mithilā. He is of beautiful complexion and has lotus-eyes. His brother too goes along with him.

On hearing about the maiden, Murāri is captivated. He feels an emotion and the heart is bent on love. His moon-like face expresses love. For the first time passion takes possession of him. Let Rāma go on and have the pleasures of love. Let Keśava take off your troubles.

Sūtra—Then after reaching Mithilā, Rāma with his brother enters the royal court. Janaka gets up and seats Rāma, and Lakṣmaṇa with Viśvāmitra in his own seat, and adores the sage.

Janaka—O the best of the sage, your coming has sanctified today my city Mithilā. I am very lucky indeed.

Sūtra—The sage utters blessings on the king.

चिरञ्जीव चिरञ्जीव राजन् सज्जनरञ्जन ।
गजवाजीमहैश्वर्यभार्यात्मजयुतः सदा ॥

[May you long live O king who is the joy of good people, and may you always live long with your wife, sons and horses, elephants and great wealth.]

Kauśika—O great king Janaka, may you always remain happy along with your sons and grandsons. I am greatly pleased with your reception.

Sūtra — O great sage, seeing these two boys of extraordinary beauty, I am highly delighted. I do not know whose sons they are, and whether they are gods or men On seeing these two my heart is much gladdened.

Sūtra — On hearing this the sage recited the following couplet.

सुतौ दशरथस्येता आगतौ रामलक्ष्मणौ ।
दुहितुस्तव सीतायाः स्वयंवरदिदृक्षया ॥

[These are Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, the sons of Daśaratha. They have come to witness the *svayamvara* of your daughter Sīta.]

Kauśika—O great king, do you not know them? They are the sons of your great friend Daśaratha and are my disciples. Their names are Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. They have come here to witness the *svayaṃvara* of your daughter Sītā. After knowing this, you are to collect an assembly and bring down the bow of Maheśa.

Sūtra — Janaka then embraces with great joy Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, and speaks.

Janaka—Ah, blessed is the king Daśaratha. How can I speak adequately of the great luck of him, who has such beautiful young men as his sons?

Sūtra — After saying all this the king gets the festivity announced by the repeated blowing of conchshells, and then orders the minister Maṇimantra to summon an assembly.

Janaka—O Maṇimantra, bring together in an assembly all the kings who are suitors for Sītā's hands, and are in their camps.

Sūtra — Hearing this Maṇimantra makes an exit.

निशम्य परमा रामा रामागमनकौतुका ।
सखीं संदेषयामास जानकी कणकावतीम् ॥

[Hearing this noise which ensued, the beautiful Sītā becomes curious about the coming of Rāma, and sends her friend Kaṇakāvatī to know about the situation.]

Sūtra — Then on hearing the sound of various kinds of drums, conch-shells and cymbals announcing a festival, Sītā asks her friend to enquire about all this.

Sītā — O Kaṇakāvatī, why is there a playing of music in the court?

Find out at once which king has come. My left limbs are throbbing. What happiness it betokens I do not know.

तस्याः कथा यथाकर्ण्य कौतुकात् कणकावती ।
ययौ राजसभां साध्वी सीतां नत्वातिसत्वरम् ॥

[After hearing her words, Kaṇakāvatī was curious and after bowing to Sītā, went out at once to the royal court.]

Sūtra — After hearing these words of Sītā, Kaṇakāvatī bows to Sītā and starts for the royal court. Look and listen.

Song

The maiden goes out in curiosity for knowing about Rāma. This is Kaṇakāvatī whose gait is majestic. On going to the assembly she sees Rāma as the moon amongst the stars. On seeing his beauty and grace, she is glad at heart, her tears come out in joy and her body and mind become restless in pleasure.

Sūtra — On seeing Rāma's beauty and grace, Kaṇakāvatī becomes astonished, and by turning back to Sītā she bows to her and speaks.

Kaṇakāvatī—O beloved friend, your great good luck has come at last.

Sītā — O great friend, tell me at once what you have seen and heard.

Kaṇakā—O the daughter of Janaka, Rāmacandra, Daśaratha's son, who surpasses millions of Cupids in beauty, has come to witness your *svayaṃvara*. It is for him that you are living this life. Glad to see him, the king Janaka has caused drums to be sounded. O friend, how shall I describe the astonishing beauty of Rāma's person. I cannot finish describing even a single limb of his in course of a century. Still I shall say something. Listen to it.

Song

Hear, O friend, plain words. How can I describe Rāma's beauty? His complexion is deep blue, and he wears a yellow garment. He has an umbrella on his head and his hairs are curled, etc.

Kaṇakā.—O friend, from the auspicious marks of his body, I understand that he is the god Nārāyaṇa. He comes to marry you in his Rāma incarnation. You need not be anxious about this. Your wishes have been fulfilled,

श्रुत्वा सखीमुखाद्रामचन्द्रस्य चरितामृतम् ।
मूर्छिता पतिता सीता सुमहाहर्षधर्षिता ॥

[On hearing about Rāma's character from her friend, Sītā due to extreme delight, fell in a swoon.]

Sūtra—On hearing the high character of her bridegroom, Sītā became extremely delighted. Look at her who has become overwhelmed with the sentiment of love.

Song

On hearing her groom's character, the maiden has been overwhelmed with delight. Her body and mind are perturbed, and tears have come out, etc.

Sūtra—Now Sītā's friend Kaṇakāvatī and Madanamantharā take hold of her, and wipe sweats off her body with the ends of their garments, and speak to her words of comfort.

Kaṇakā—O dear friend, he, on thinking over whose feet, you are so long waiting, has at last been brought over here by the providence.

Madanamantharā—O friend, why have you become so perturbed at this time of joy? O girl, be pacified.

Sūtra—On her friend's words Sītā became pacified, and turned aside while she thought about Rāma.

ततो नृपान् यथानीय मणिमन्तो नृपाज्ञया ।
कारयामास महतीं सभामुत्सवशोभिताम् ॥

[Then at the king's command Maṇimantra brought together all the kings, and they met in an assembly, and a festivity started.]

Sūtra—Then Maṇimantra brings together the kings and they meet in an assembly. Look at them and listen.

Song

All the kings hold the bow and arrows. The earth trembles under their feet. They have bow in their arms and the sword in their hands, etc.

सखीभिः साकम् अभ्येतां जानकीं जनकोऽन्वयात् ।

महेशधनुषं स्कन्धे निधाय शोभितां सभाम् ॥

[Sītā with her friends comes in the decorated assembly and Janaka follows her with the bow of Śiva on his shoulder.]

Sūtra—Then Janaka enters his inner hall, and with Śiva's bow on his shoulder he comes out. And with him comes delighted Sītā who has been dressed up with proper garments and ornaments and she has a lotus garland in her hand, and her friends come along with her. Look at this and listen.

Song

The maiden Jānakī walks in joy and curiosity. Her friends are all in a sportive mood. They wave the ends of their garments The maiden is longing the touch of her new bridegroom, and a garland is hanging from her hand. The bells in her jewelled anklets are making sweet sounds, and the maiden goes to her beloved with a majestic gait. On seeing this, the kings are burning in jealousy. So says the servant of Kṛṣṇa.

Sūtra—On seeing the beauty and grace of the princess, the kings are smitten badly with Cupid's arrows. They lose their senses. But on regaining their senses, the kings piteously implore Sītā for her favour.

One king—O my dear, I am sinking in the deep sea of passion. Save my life.

Another king—(*putting his finger in the mouth*) O princess, my heart is smitten by Cupid. Please save me by touching me with your hands.

Another king—(*bitting a straw in his teeth*) O fair lady, Cupid's arrow is piercing my heart. I shall expire. Please save me by the nectar of your sweet words.

Another king—(*mad with passion*) All the queens that are in my palace will serve you as your hand-maids. Please make me your humble slave. Please stand still before me for a while, and save me by your glance.

Sūtra—The kings mad with passion openly make all such unseemly reflections. Seeing them misbehave like this, Sītā's friends Kaṇakāvati, Madanamantharā, Candrāvatī and Sūryaprabhā insult them, and rebuke them. But they do not care for this and still implore the princess Sītā. O men, ye look at the foolish kings overcome with passion. They do not know that Janaka's daughter is the Universal Mother.

जगाद जनको वाक्यं पश्यन्त्वेतद्धनुर्नृपाः ।
इदं सज्यं करोति यः तस्मै सीतां समर्प्येयम् ॥

[Looking at the bow Janaka said. "He who will string it will be given Sītā in marriage."]

Janaka—O kings, listen, I am speaking the truth. While I was thinking of Sītā's marriage, this bow of Śiva dropped down from the sky, and then came the divine voice, "Sītā will choose as her husband the person who will put string to it. Knowing this to be my promise, you are to make an attempt."

Sūtra — On hearing this, a king named Śatadhanu girds up his loins with great ado, and takes up the bow first of all. But while attempting to put the string to it he falls down on his back. Then Candraketu holds the bow, but while making the attempt he overturns along with the bow. Next the king Purañjaya with great pride takes up the bow, but his strength failing he falls down on it. The king Kumudākṣa next girds up his loins, bites his lips and tries to take up the bow with great effort, but failing in his attempt he is vexed.

राममाह मुनिर्वत्स किन्निरीक्ष्येह तिष्ठसि ।
कौशल्यानन्दनोत्तिष्ठ त्वं सज्यं कुरु कार्मुकम् ॥

[The sage said to Rāma, "O boy, why are you looking on, O son of Kauśalyā, get up and put string to this bow."]

Sūtra — O members of the assembly, seeing the very sad plight of the assembled kings the sage speaks to Rāma.

Kauśika—O son of Kauśalyā, why are you looking on, get up and quickly put string to the bow.

Rāma — (*saluting the sage*) O the best sage, I am a boy, and this bow is harder than adamant. How can I have power to put string to it? Still I shall obey your command. I shall not be ashamed in case of a failure, for so many kings have failed to string it. (*Then he girded his waist with his yellow garments*).

Kings — (*laughing at him*) Whose son is he? Will he put us to censure?

Sūtra — Rāmacandra takes hold of the Ajagava bow, and like a flower garland he throws it up, to hold it again in hand. Seeing this the kings' faces turn pale.

धृते धनुषि रामेण सीता शङ्कितमानसा ।
अनन्तं कच्छपं पृथ्वीं याचित्वेदं जगाद सा ॥

[Rāma taking up the bow, Sītā with fear in her mind begged the earth and Ananta the snake and the great tortoise to be on their guard.]

Sūtra — O spectators, when Rāma takes up the bow Sītā becomes afraid and anxious.

Sītā — Ah, my bridegroom is of a very tender age. This bow of Maheśa is harder than adamant. Can he put string to this? O my father, what a cruel condition you have made? (*thinking within herself, she addresses the earth*) O mother earth, remain still. O father Ananta, hold the earth firmly on your hood. O great tortoise, carry this vast earth firmly on your back. If through your grace the prince can put

string to the bow, this poor self will get her protection. (*so saying Sītā looks on at her bridegroom*).

रामस्तु शङ्कितां सीतां निरीक्ष्य कृपया प्रभुः।
प्रसह्य सज्यमकरोत् लीलयाजगवं धनुः ॥

[Rāma looking in pity at Sītā put at once the string to the bow without much effort.]

Sūtra — The merciful Rāmacandra seeing at that time the pitiful condition of Sītā, playfully puts string to the bow. This divine personage Rāmacandra smilingly pulls the bow back to his ears, and releases it with a twang. With a great noise it breaks asunder in the middle. Like people at the clap of thunder, the kings are astonished to see the great strength of Rāma. Seeing the bow broken, Sītā is beside herself with joy, and puts her flower-garland round Rāma's neck, and speaks. Look and listen.

Song

The princess smiles in joy, and walks to Rāma and puts the garland round Rāma's neck, and touches his feet in adoration. Rāma holds her up, and she is in his arms.

Sūtra — O spectators, Sītā makes Rāma her husband, on presenting the betel and camphor to him, and becomes joyful. On seeing this, all the kings feel aggrieved, and losing their senses in anger, they take up bows and arrows, and challenge Rāma boastfully.

The kings—O, whose son is this? He is carrying off our bride away. Fie on us, the kings.

Sūtra — So saying they make a great noise saying "hold him on, kill him."

श्रुत्वा सीताभवद्भीता भूपालवीर भाषितम्।
रुरोद वेपथुमती शोचन्ती च पतिं प्रति ॥

[Hearing the violent words of the kings, Sītā feels terrified, and weeps in sorrow for her husband.]

Sūtra — Hearing the frenzied words of the kings, Sītā is overcome with fear. Look and listen how she laments over her husband's plight.

Sītā — Ah my sad fate, my husband is of a very tender age, and his only help is his younger brother. How can he defeat the kings in fight. O cruel fate, why do you strike me like this.

Sūtra — O spectators, look and listen to Jānakī's laments.

Song

Her consciousness is indeed gone. She sheds tears. In grief the maiden laments for her beloved. She got this great husband for her good deeds in a past birth, but the crooked fate is going to snatch him from her. For the matchless beloved, her heart is perturbed. Looking at him she breathes hard and repeats the name of Hari.

भीतां सीतां ततो राम निरीक्ष्य कृपया प्रभुः ।
प्राह प्रियां समाश्वास्य मा भैः सीते स्थिते मयि ॥

[Seeing Sītā to take fright, the lord Rāma looked at her in pity, and assured his beloved, telling her, 'O Sītā, do no be afraid as long as I am here.']

Sūtra—Seeing Sītā in great distress (owing to fear) Rāma takes her in arms, and speaks words of comfort.

Rāma—O my dearest, whom are you afraid of? What are these kings before me? They are like so many young deer before a lion. They will soon run away when I shoot my arrows. Just see the fun.

Sūtra—Saying all this, Rāma pulls the bow with a twang, and speaks to the kings.

Rāma—O sinful kings, I have won Sītā by breaking up the bow. Why are you turning against me? But you may fight me if you have strength enough.

Sūtra—Hearing Rāma's words, the kings very boastfully twang their bows, and shower arrows on him. Rāma cuts these off, and strikes the kings with arrows and pierces their hearts. Some of them are struck in the thigh, some in the neck or arms, and some run away in fear.

निरीक्ष्य साक्षाद्रामस्य विजयं जनको मुदा ।
विवाहे विधिवद् वीरो राघवाय सुतामदात् ॥

[Seeing Rāma's triumph in the fight, the heroic Janaka gladly gives with due ceremony his daughter in marriage to Rāghava.]

Sūtra—Then seeing the great valour of Rāma in the fight, Janaka is very glad in his heart. He sends an envoy to invite Daśaratha to come. The king Daśaratha comes, and seeing the son's valour and his winning of Sītā, he embraces Janaka in delight and dances in joy. The king makes all preparations for the marriage ceremony. Now, when the ceremonial bath is being given to the bridegroom and the bride, Brahmaṅ, Indra, Rudra and other gods come to express their joy. Look and listen.

Song

Raghunātha marries Sītā with joy and all the gods come thither in delight. Śambhu and Brahman sing his praise and Indra plays on the drum with pleasure and the heavenly maidens shower flowers on the couple and every one's wish is fulfilled.

Sūtra—Getting Sītā married with such a pomp and festivity, Janaka gives to Rāma as dowry all he could afford to give. And after showing great honour to Daśaratha he sends the bridegroom and the bride to Ayodhyā.

ततोऽतिकौतुकी रामः प्रियया सह सीतया ।
ससोदरो मुदा भ्राजन् अयोध्यां प्रायया पुरीम् ॥

[Then the supremely pleased Rāma, together with his dear Sītā and the brother start joyfully for Ayodhyā.]

Sūtra—Then Rāmacandra with his dear Sītā and the younger brother, goes towards Ayodhyā. O spectators, look and listen.

Song

With pleasure Rāma goes with his bride Sītā. It seems that the lightning has flashed in the blue cloud; the maiden's gait is majestic, her bangles tinkle sweetly as she goes dancingly, and seeing her groom beside her, she is smiling a bashful smile, etc.

तत आगत्य तरसा भार्गवो भ्रुकुटिमुखः ।
स्कन्धे निधाय कठिनं कुठारं राममब्रवीत् ॥

[Then Bhārgava with a frowning face comes there at once with a terrible axe on his shoulder and speaks to Rāma.]

Sūtra—With such a festive procession, Rama and Sītā are going to Ayodhyā. But on hearing the crashing noise with which the bow of Śiva broke, Paraśurāma was very angry and came to stand before Rāma with the axe on his shoulder and said, "Stand still, stand still!"

Paraśurāma—O man, how can you escape after breaking the bow of my guru? Do you not know the story of Paraśurāma? For twentyone times I roamed over the earth and cut off the heads of Kṣatriyas. The axe has been soiled with their blood. Ah! I shall clean it with the blood of your neck (*so saying he challenges Rāma*).

तन्निशम्याभवद् भीतो भयाद्दशरथो नृपः ।
स्कन्धे च वसनं बद्ध्वा भार्गवस्य पदेऽपतत् ॥

[Hearing this the king Daśaratha becomes terrified, and putting his cloth on his neck falls at Bhārgava's feet.]

Sūtra—Seeing the angry attitude of Paraśurāma, Daśaratha has become very nervous. "This is a disaster, this is a disaster," he says, and putting his cloth round his neck he falls at the feet of Bhārgava, and implores him to have mercy, but Bhārgava is unrelenting.

Daśaratha—O Lord Paraśurama, my son Rāmacandra is a oy. Please excuse his faults. From now on he becomes your slave. I beg of you to give me my son as a gift, and spare him. If you do not forgive him, kill me in his stead, (*clasping Rāma*) Ah my son, you have fallen in the hands of death. This will be the last moment of my seeing you (*so saying Daśaratha laments much.*)

विलोक्य भार्गवं भीता सीता वेपितमानसा ।
रुरोद पतिमालिंग्य हा हताऽस्मीतिवादिनी ॥

[Seeing Bhārgava, Sītā trembles in fear and putting her arms round her husband, she laments, "Ah, I am done for."]

Sūtra — Then on seeing Parāśurāma who is like the god of death, Sītā trembles in fear.

Sītā — How is my husband full of all virtues and qualities to be taken away today from me? What a mishap the fate has brought!

Song

The maiden laments in dispair seeing as her dear life is departing. For immense virtues of the past I have got my husband who is being taken away by fate. Tears come down from her eyes, and she breathes heavy sighs. The cruel fate spoils everything.

सन्तापं प्रेक्ष्य सीताया भक्तायां भक्तवत्सलः ।
प्रियां प्रोवाच परमां पाणिना मार्ज्यन् मुखम् ॥

Sūtra — Seeing the great distress of the devoted Sītā, Rāma wipes off Sītā's face with his own hands, and speaks loving words of comfort.

Rāma — O my dear, are you frightened seeing the boast of this sage who lives in a hermitage? He is indeed no better than a moth before me. Look, I shall at once crush this bragging

Brahmin. O my beloved, look in curiosity how I shall humiliate his head.

Daśaratha—(*humbly beseeching Paraśurāma*) O great sage, spare my son please, I fall at your feet.

Paraśurāma—(*biting his lips in anger*) O axe, how art thou quiet now about Daśaratha's son, for thou couldst cut off the neck of my mother Reṇukā? Fie on thee; fie on me!

Sūtra — So saying he takes up the axe, and looking at Rāma's head he throws up the axe in the air and catches it back. His body trembles in anger.

विश्वामित्रस्तदागत्य भार्गवं प्राह कोपतः ।
अरे द्विजकुलाङ्गार मच्छिष्यं हन्तुमिच्छसि ।।

[Viśvāmitra comes there and speakes in anger to Bhargava, "O base Brahmin, you like to kill my disciple!"]

Kauśika—O wicked Brahmin, Rāmacandra is my best disciple. You are going to kill him? Come with all your strength, and fight with me. I shall crush your pride.

Sūtra — Paraśurāma becomes angry, and holds his staff and Viśvāmitra too does likewise. The staffs of the two break upon striking each other. Then they catch hold of each other's beard. Next they come to fight with their arms. The deer-skin which they wear, slips off during the fight. Paraśurāma is partially an incarnation of Viṣṇu. So Viśvāmitra gets defeated and runs away for life. Paraśurāma again holds his axe up and challanges Rāma.

लक्ष्मणः प्रेक्ष्य तद्दर्पं राममाह सकोपतः ।
आज्ञापय वधे चास्य दुर्जनस्याततायिनः ।

[Seeing his boast Lakṣmaṇa says to Rāma in anger—"Order me to kill this wicked enemy."]

Sūtra — Seeing the great boast of the sage, Lakṣmaṇa girds up his waist, and speaks to Rāma,

Lakṣmaṇa—O the lord of Raghus, there can be no sin in killing this wicked enemy. Order me, I will make him leave his life.

Sūtra —So saying, Lakṣmaṇa twangs his bow and faces Daśaratha, and speaks to him.

Lakṣmaṇa—O father, why are you imploring this sinful killer of Kṣatriyas? Move aside at once. I shall cut off his head.

Rāma —(*smilingly*) O brother, you are a boy, so keep quiet. I shall punish this wicked Brahmin. Look on quietly at the fight.

धनुष्टंकारमकरोत् भार्गवं भीषयन् प्रभुः ।
तिष्ठ तिष्ठेति तं प्राह नयाम्यद्य यमालयम् ॥

[The lord twangs his bow and terrifies Bhārgava, and then he says, "Do not run away, do not run away, I will send you to-day to death's door."]

Sūtra — Twanging his bow Śārṅga, Rāmacandra comes before Paraśurāma, and speaks.

Rāma —O the wicked and vile Brahmin, you are priding over the killing of Kṣatriyas. You have sinned by cutting off the head of your mother Reṇukā. And you are trying to terrify me by telling all this. But do not run away. If you have power, remain in front of me. I shall show you the way to death's door.

Sūtra —O spectators, Rāma's twang of the bow strikes terror into Paraśurāma's heart. He begins to tremble in fear. The axe drops from his hands. Look, how he runs away for fear of life.

Song

Raghunātha holds Śārṅga in his hand, and on seeing this the sage's hands and feet tremble in fear. His axe falls down, and his anger goes off. He drops down to make obeisance to Rāma. Save my life, I am your part and bow to you humbly.

Sūtra —Parśurāma falls at Rāma's feet, and speaks many piteous words.

Paraśurāma—O lord Rāma, you are the supreme God. I am your part. Forgetting this I boasted. Forgive me, O Lord. (*Seeing the sad plight of Bhārgava Lakṣmaṇa smiles*).

Rāma —(*smilingly*) O Rāma of Bhṛgu's race, my strongest and irrevocable arrow has been made ready to strike you dead. It cannot be held back (*so saying he pulls the string towards his ears*).

Paraśurāma—(*putting his fingers in his mouth*) O lord, you are my god-father: Save my life.

Rāma —(*smilingly*) O Bhṛgu's son, be free from fear. Your life has been spared. But my arrow cannot be in vain. I shall obstruct your heavenly path (*shoots in the sky*).

Paraśurāma—(*embracing Rāma*) O father, through your kindness I am saved today (*he goes back to the hermitage*).

निर्जित्य भार्गवं रामं प्रियया सह राघवः ।
पुरीमयोध्यामाविशन् मातृभिः सम्प्रवेशितः ॥

[Rāma after conquering Bhārgava enters with his dear Sītā the city of Ayodhyā where his mothers welcome him.]

Sūtra —O Spectators, after conquering Bhārgava, Rāma with his dear wife Sītā enters Ayodhyā when Rāma's mother Kauśalyā hears of Rāma's marriage, and triumph over Paraśurāma. She receives Rāma and his bride amidst song, music and general festivity. Thus is completed the ceremony of Rāma's marriage.

The Mahānāṭaka and the Early Hindu Drama

The *Mahānāṭaka* (MN) is written almost entirely in verse, and the verse in it is very often of the narrative as opposed to the dramatic type. No character in this play uses Prakrit, and the familiar figure of Vidūṣaka is also absent in it, though the number of persons appearing in it, is quite large. All these features very clearly separate it from the rest of Sanskrit dramas of the traditional types. Mainly on the basis of these peculiarities Max Müller as early as 1846 considered the MN to be a precursor of the Skt. drama.[1] He saw in it the beginning of the Hindu dramatic art in a long forgotten period when the boundary of the epic was going to expand, and when the dramatic composition as such, had no independent existence. In 1890 this view was practically upheld by Sylvain Lévi.[2] Though he did not consider the work to be very old, yet he had no doubt that it represented a type of dramatic show which existed before Kālidāsa and which might even be earlier than the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (NŚ.). Pischel too first accepted Max Müller's view,[3] though later on with Lüders he came to believe that the MN was a shadow-play[4]. And Sten Konow writing in 1920 thought that the work was written in imitation of some folk-play, the Brahmins taking a specimen of folk-art and giving it a stamp of courtly entertainment.[5] Winternitz whose third volume of the History of Indian Literature (in German) was also published in 1920, rejects however the antiquity ascribed to the literary form of the MN as viewed by Max Müller and Lévy, and he seems to have taken it as a very early specimen of shadow-play.[6] Keith who was the most important scholar to write afterwards on the subject,

1 *Jahrbücher für wissenschftliche Kritik*, p. 472 ff. Winternitz, *Geschichte der indischen Litteratur*, vol III, p. 243, footnote.

2 *Le théater indien*, pp. 7, 156, 244.

3 SBA, 1906 pp. 498ff. *Ref.* Winternitz *op. cit.*

4 SBA, 1956, pp. 698ff and KG. pp. 179ff. *Ref.* Winternitz.

5 *Das indische Drama*, pp. 89ff.

6 *op. cit.* pp. 242ff.

rejects in 1924 Lüders' view about the MN being a shadow-play, and thinks that the peculiarities of the MN can be explained in other ways.[7] But his remark that it looks like a *tour de force* does not help us in this regard. In spite of this, he seems to be inclined to see in the MN 'the old work of the Granthikas', though he says that "it would be dangerous in so late a production to lay any stress on the possibility of deriving hence evidence for growth of the early drama".[8] Similarity between a Tamil version of the *Śakuntalā* and the MN. has also been considered by Keith to be in favour of the view to which he gives preference.

Now Keith's very cautious view seems to put us in the right track regarding the solution of the problem. If it can in any way be shown that the MN in its arche-type was really a very old work there may not be any valid objection to accept finally Max Müller's view. It will be necessary for this purpose to look into the text-history of the MN which is available in two very widely varying recensions. Of these, Dāmodara's version contains 581 stanzas in 14 acts and Madhusūdan's version, 730 stanzas in 9 acts. These two have only 300 stanzas in common.[9] Hence it may be legitimately assumed that the MN originally was not divided into acts[10] and its arche-type contained about 300 stanzas, and the remaining stanzas are later additions. We should however leave aside from the stanzas common to the two recensions a few passages that may have come from the known Rāma-dramas. But their number seems to be quite small in comparison with the bulk of additions in the two recensions; for in Dāmodara's version no less than 281 stanzas were added while the number of added stanzas in Madhusūdana's recension is 430. This number probably shows the great popularity which the MN once enjoyed. Even if it can be said that the peculiar form of the MN tended to invite interpolators, it does not completely explain such a luxurious growth of interpolation into the two recensions of the MN.

7 *Sanskrit Drama*, pp. 270ff.
8 *ibid.*
9 *ibid.*
10 *Indian Historical Quarterly*, 1931, p. 566.

A study of the variant readings of the *Śakuntalā* and the *Mṛcchakaṭika* will easily convince one of the validity of this view. For these two very greatly admired works have not many interpolated stanzas. In view of these facts one may assume that the MN is a genuinely ancient work, much older than Ānandavardhana who quotes from it; but it may even be older than the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. The fact that the NŚ does not mention any dramatic type comparable to the MN should not stand in the way of this assumption. The author of the NŚ had many predecessors belonging probably to different schools[11] and some of them might well have described a type of dramatic work analogous to the MN, which was ignored by the NŚ. This assumption about the NŚ, has a support from the fact that it does not recognize *Toṭaka* as one of the *rūpakas* though some later scoliast, evidently on the authority of some ancient writer, calls the *Vikramorvaśīya* a *Toṭaka*.

All these facts seem to give us grounds for presumption that the anonymous MN (i. e. in its different recensions)[12] remained out of view for a long time, like the works of Kauṭilya and Bhāsa, and was discovered later on and ascribed to Hanuman by means of a fabricated myth[13] and it may therefore be considered a very ancient work showing a very early stage in the evolution of the Hindu drama.

11 *The Nāṭyaśāstra* (English translation) Calcutta, 1951, pp. LXIV-LXV.

12 A critical edition of the MN based on all the recensions is a desideratum. It is not yet settled which recension is older. Lüders was not sure whether the shorter recension is older (SBA. 1916, pp. 704ff. *Ref.* Winternitz). Dr. S. K. De in his article on MN in IHQ (1931 pp. 541ff) thinks that the shortest text available in the Dacca University Mss. Collection, is of the oldest recension. But after the publication of A. Esteller's work (*Die altest Rezension des Mahānāṭaka*, Leipzig 1936) he has given up this view, it seems, rather hastily (*vide* his *Hist. of Skt. Literature*, p. 506). Esteller's view is that Dāmodara's version is the primary source, and Madhusūdana's derivative. But on the basis of several features noticed by Dr. S. K. De in the shortest text discovered by him (IHQ, 1931, p. 566), it appears that this text is the oldest, though Esteller has differed on this point. It is a pity that Dr. De's critical edition of the MN based on Dacca Mss. of the shortest text and Madhusūdana's version, remains incomplete (*vide* IHQ, 1931, pp. 569ff.).

13 The fact that the MN was composed entirely in Sanskrit may also be taken in favour of its great antiquity. See above p. 7.

The Age and Authorship of the Mrcchakatika

To early writers on Indian drama, the *Mṛchakaṭika* (Mk) appeared to be a very old work—older even than the plays of Kālidāsa[1] But with the discovery of the *Cārudatta* (Cd) ascribed to Bhāsa, the question of the date of the Mk. has entered a new phase.[2] For the plays discovered by Ganapati Shastri and published from Trivandrum, irrespective of their authorship, have generally been accepted as very old works. As there can be little doubt that the author of the Mk. was indebted to this long-lost Cd.,[3] one can no longer believe in the great antiquity once assigned to the former work. Hence scholars are now making fresh attempts to ascertain its age.[4]

To begin with, one must take up the question of Trivandrum plays first. Though there is no unanimity amongst scholars about their authorship, yet they are fairly agreed to take these plays as products of the third century A. C.[5] Hence we may bring down the date of the Mk. to the fourth century. This relieves us of the necessity of discussing Sten Konow's view that Śūdraka the author of the Mk. is to be identified with the Ābhīra king Śivadatta (circa 250 A. C.).[6] His view has also been refuted by Charpentier.[7] Jacobi also believes on the basis of the astrological data of the Mk. that it could not have been composed prior to the fourth century.[8] Hence we are to see if the 5th century may be the time of Śūdraka. That at least three passages of this work show some similarity to the

1. See Sten Konow, *Das indische Drama* p. 57 and S. K. De, *Sanskrit Literature*, Calcutta, 1947, p. 240.

2. See Morgenstierne, *Über das Verhättnis Zwischen Cārudatta and Mṛcchakaṭika*, Leipzig, 1921.

3. See *ibid.*

4. See Keith *Skt. Drama*, pp. 128ff.

5. See Keith. *op. cit.* p. 95. See also. Winternitz, *Geschichte der indischen Literature*, Vol. III. p. 186, 645.

6. See Keith, *op. cit.* p. 129.

7. See JRAS. 1923, pp. 595 ff.

8. See *Bhavisattakaha*, Munich, 1918, p. 83 f.n. Ref. S. K. De.

three passages in Kālidāsa's works, may give us some clue in this matter. Parallel passages in this case must have been due to an influence of one on another.

The first of these passages is the Viṭa's reference to Vasantasenā as *praharaṇam anaṅgasya* (Mk. V. 12) which corresponds to Menakā's reference to Urvaśī as *suumāraṃ paharaṇaṃ mahindassa—sukumāraṃ praharaṇaṃ mahendrasya* in the Vikramorvaśī (I. 3. 13).

In the second passage Vasantasenā during her *abhisāra* in a rainy night, addresses the cloud as follows:

जलधर निर्लज्जस्त्वं यन्मां दयितस्य वेश्म गच्छन्तीम् ।
स्तनितेन भीषयित्वा धाराहस्तैः परामृशसि ॥ (V. 28)

In the *Meghadūta* (38) the Yakṣa speaks to the cloud as follows:

तोयोत्सर्गस्तनितमुखरो मास्म भूर्विक्लवास्ताः ।

In the third passage Cārudatta in refuting the charge of murdering Vasantasenā for her ornaments, says:

योऽहं लतां कुसुमितामपि पुष्पहेतोराकृष्य नैव कुसुमावचयं करोमि । (IX. 28)

This is to be compared with Kaṇva's words (the *Ābhijñāna-śakuntala*. IV) which are as follows: —

नादत्ते प्रियमण्डनापि भवतां स्नेहेन या पल्लवम्

Now in all three passages, Śūdraka seems to be the borrower. For the heavenly nymphs like Urvaśī are well-known as agents of Indra (Mahendra) in frustrating persons whose great austerities (*tapas*) might enable them to win his royal seat. This creates a wealth of imagery around the simile. But calling a courtezan "an agent of Anaṅga (Cupid)" constitutes merely a commonplace expression. Śūdraka's inferior literary craftsmanship is also evident in his describing the courtezan at the same time as "the sorrow of good married ladies," and as "the flower of a tree which is Anaṅga (Madana = cupid)" himself.

In the second passage *jaladhara* etc., it is apparent that the simile of Kālidāsa has been developed by Śūdraka who ascribes to the cloud the role of an angry lover frightening his woman in her way to her new lover who is his rival. In spite of the novelty in Śūdraka's idea, it smacks of too much artificiality.

In the third passage too, Śūdraka's debt to Kālidāsa is clear. For girls naturally like flowers to decorate their person, and hence their compassion to creepers while plucking flowers from them evokes our admiration, while tender-heartedness claimed by Cārudatta for himself, appears to be a cheap conceit of Śūdraka. For was not Cārudatta a great merchant who earned immense wealth by overseas trade?

Kālidāsa's priority to Śūdraka may also be assumed from the stylistic difference of the two writers in their Pkt. passages. For Kālidāsa does not use many big compounds in Pkt., and his Pkt. compound words never include more than four members, while Śūdraka used in quite a number of times compounds formed of more than five words, and even his Madanikā speaks as follows:

किं अणेअणअराहिगमणजणिदविहववित्थारो वाणिअज्जुआ वा कामोअदि (II)

Largest number of big compounds (of more than four members) are however to be found in the Act V where the Vidūṣaka describes Vasantasenā's palatial residence.

If our assumption is justified, Śūdraka should be assigned to a period after the 5th century when Kālidāsa is generally believed to have flourished. This seems to find support from Jolly who has shown that the legal knowledge reflected in the ninth act of the Mk, follows what is found in the Smṛti works belonging to the 6th and the 7th centuries.[9] As the earliest mention of Śūdraka's name is in Vāmana's *Kāvyālaṃkārasūtra* (III. 2. 4) of the 8th century, and as two stanzas from the Mk. have been quoted in the same work,[10] it may be taken as certain that Śūdraka wrote his play in the 6th or 7th century A. C. The prologue of the work also seems to point in the same direction. For it was in the plays written from the 7th century downwards that we come across a eulogy of the playwright in the prologue of his plays. The royal playwright Harṣa who calls himself a *nipuṇaḥkaviḥ* (skilful poet) in his prologue to the *Ratnāvalī* seems to be a pioneer in this regard. Bhavabhūti who was a younger

9. Tagore Law Lectures, Calcutta, 1883, pp. 68ff. Ref. S. K. De.
10. See S. K. De, *Skt. Literature*, p. 242.

contemporary of Harṣa added also autobiographical elements in the prologue of his plays. But in Śūdraka's prologue we meet with an eulogy mixed up with biographical details. As this prologue mentions Śūdraka's self-immolation in fire, it cannot be from his own hands. It is possible that this portion of the prologue was interpolated into it by some later admirer of the royal author. Hence it seems very much likely that Śūdraka flourished in the 6th century A. C. For unlike Bhavabhūti he did not include his own biography in the prologue of his play.

The Hindu Drama in East and South-East Asia

Convinced of the high artistic value of the drama of different nations of the East and the South-East Asia, the late A.K. Coomaraswamy wrote, "Few undertakings could be imagined more interesting or more illuminating than a survey of the forms of the theatre surviving in India, Indonesia and the Far East."[1] He further thought that a widely extended survey of this kind would among other things "emphasise the cultural relationship of areas once united by the closest ties." This is the reason why a study of the history and development of the Hindu drama should include a similar study of the dramatic activities of the different Asian countries such as Indonesia, Burma, Ceylon, Siam, Indo-china (Combodia and Annam), China, Korea and Japan, which had close cultural contact with India in the past.

IN INDONESIA. The fact which seems to give us grounds to connect the drama of Java and Bali with that of ancient India, is that the Wayang Orang or Wayang Wong, the principal drama form of the former countries consists of the representation by living actors of episodes derived from Javanese versions of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* or from the local Panji cycles. As regards the subject-matter, it is comparable to the Indian Nāṭaka which also is based on stories taken from the two great epics and the Purāṇas. In the technique of its production also, the Wayang Orang resembles the Indian drama.

The following points deserve special mention in this present connexion :

Just as in the dramatic performance described in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, "there is no line of division between dancing and acting, and if the actor does not always dance in the literal sense of the term, the action is nevertheless rhythmic throughout, and marches with music,"[2] and it is by means of definite "gestures that every range of emotion

1 *Notes on the Javanese theatre*, Rūpam, 7, p. 5.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*

and experience is suggested. In it, changes of scene are given with the entry and exit of actors, everyone in the audience being perfectly familiar with the course of the story."[4]

All these taken together with other facts of the Indonesian cultural history may perhaps be considered a sufficient ground to assume that the drama of Java and Bali owes its origin to ancient India and it may be hoped that scholars with a better knowledge of the ancient Indian drama will discover in those points, similarity between the drama of the two regions, and establish their historic connexion with further details.

On one point however the Javanese drama differs from the assumed Indian original as we see it described in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. The clown of the Wayang Orang uses the highest dialect analogous to Sanskrit of India instead of the common people's speech of Prakrit which the *Nāṭyaśāstra* prescribes for the Jester (*vidūṣaka*). The use of the highest dialect by the clown in the Wayang Orang may not weaken our assumption about its origin from the ancient Indian Nāṭya. For in its pre-historic period, the Indian drama was composed exclusively in Sanskrit. And probably such a drama furnished the prototype of the Javanese clown. This will place the migration of the Indian drama to Indonesia long before the Christian era when Sanskrit instead of Pkt. was in all likelihood used by the Jester (*vidūṣaka*) too. There is nothing improbable in such an inference. For there is a tradition that Aśoka sent missionaries to the Suvarṇabhūmi (Malay) a region not far off from Indonesia. And the description of Java in the very ancient epic of *Rāmāyaṇa*, points also to a connexion between this country and India at a very remote age.

IN BURMA AND CEYLON. The old Burmese drama appears to owe its origin to the Hindu theatre. In view of the proximity of Burma and India this seems to be very natural. The points on which plays of Burma and ancient India appear to have similarity are as follows[5].

(i) Song and dance as well as instrumental music are indispensable elements of a performance.

4 *Ibid.*

5 *Indo-Asian Culture*, vol. I, (1953) p. 269.

(ii) A Jester (*vidūṣaka*) is present in most of the plays.

(iii) Unity of place is totally absent from a play.

The ancient Ceylonese drama had probably a close connexion with the drama of contemporary India. The two countries being very near to each other such a connexion was inevitable. And from an account of the ceremonial dance of the Sinhalese, the trace of such a connexion has been discovered.[6]

IN SIAM. That the classical dramatic art of Siam owes its origin to ancient India, is more or less clear to writers on the subject. The following points deserve mention in this connexion:[7]

(i) Dance, song and the instrumental music are indispensable parts of the Siamese classical drama.

(ii) Stereotyped gestures play a very important part in the acting.

(iii) The five musical instruments which make up the orchestra of the Siamese theatre, are of Indian origin. Words denoting their classes are Sanskrit e.g. *suṣira*, *ātata*, *vitata*, *ātata-vitata* and *ghana*. Of these the example of the *suṣira* is a flute, of the *vitata* a one-faced drum, of the *ātata-vitata*, a two-faced drum i.e. *mṛdaṅga*, and of the *ghana* a pair of cymbals. The example of the *ātata* seems to be the Dardara or Dardura of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, which is covered with hide on one side.

(iv) The following names of gestures and dance movements are comparable to those of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*.

a. 'Le cygne que marche' (*haṃsagati*)

b. 'Elephants qui croisent burs defense' (*gaja-vikrama*?)

c. 'Dance de la Kinnari' (*kinnarī-cārī*)

d. 'Boutons de lotus' (*padmakośa*)

e. 'Lotus epanoue' (*phulla-kamala*)

f. 'Lotus que se deploie' (*kamala-vikāsa*)

g. 'L'araignee qui tisse sa toile' (*ūrṇanābhagati*)

6 Vide infra *The Sinhalese Dances and Drama.*

7 R. Nicholas, *Le Lakbon Nora on Lakhon chatri et les origines du théatre classique siamois*, Journal of the Siamese Society, XVIII, 1924.

(v) The following musical terms remind one of similar terms used in the Indian music.

a. 'lente' (*vilambita*), 'presto' (*druta*) and 'egal (*sama*), andante' (*madhya*) refer to the tempo (*laya*).

b. 'Theme du vol', 'theme des larmes', 'theme du bain,' 'theme des caresses', 'themes tres rapid indiquant la sortie des personages' probably indicate themes suitable to be sung on the occasion of one going through the sky, shedding tears, taking bath, receiving or giving caresses, or going out quickly. These perhaps relate to Dhruvās suiting different occasions in a play.

IN INDO-CHINA. (i) *Cambodia*—The drama of Indo-China follows two different traditions in its two different parts, Cambodia and Annam. According to some observers the theatre of Cambodia has been derived from Siam[8] which as we have seen received this art from ancient India. One peculiarity of the Cambodian drama is that it is performed exclusively by female artistes. Such a practice is however not available in Siamese theatre. But from the *Nāṭyaśāstra* it appears that women only were sometimes employed in producing plays for the king and his family.

It seems that this custom in producing plays was taken by the Cambodians directly from India.

(*ii*) *ANNAM.* The ancient drama of Annam has similarity to that of China and is probably related to it. We shall see below that the classical Chinese drama owes in its turn its origin to the Indian Nāṭya[9].

IN CHINA. The connexion between the drama of China and of India is more or less clear. The following are the points from which the Indian origin of this drama may be assumed[10].

(i) The principle of acting is more conventional than realistic. For the actor's purpose is to create an artistic effect rather

8 M. Gaston Knosp, *Le théatre en Indochine*, Anthropos, III, 1908. pp. 290-292. Jeanne Cuisinier holds a different view. See *Danses Combodgiennes*, p. 31.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 287.

10 S. L. Zung, *Secrets of the Chinese Drama*, Shanghai, 1937, pp. 19, 23, 31, 44, 60, 97-147.

than to be true to life. For it is the ideal and not the real that he is to emphasise. "Not only in intonation such as musical cadence in speech, and rhythmical recitation in poetry, but also in bodily movements such as gait and sleeve-movement, there is striking difference from sounds and actions of daily life". As in the Indian drama as described in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, there are various rules which must be carefully observed by actors and actresses while representing a character. Any expression of feeling, a smile, frown, a sigh, an indication of surprise must be conventionally given in accordance with a special music.

(ii) Chinese actors have various kinds of conventional movements for hands, arms, feet, legs and waist.

(iii) Besides these there are various pantomimic movements to represent mounting and dismounting a horse, to rein or to lead a horse, to take a seat, riding a boat, climbing a hill or wall.

(iv) There are Zonal divisions of the stage.

(v) Use of different colours and head-dresses for different characters.

(vi) The two openings on the back-stage corresponding to two doors of the old Indian stage leading to the tiring-room.

(vii) Use of musical instruments such as cup-shaped bells (*mandirā*), cymbals (*karatāla*) and lute (*vīṇā*).

History also seems to point to the dependence of China on the ancient India for the development of her drama. For according one writer, "Gestures which are an essential part of the Chinese drama are derived from the ancient dances" but not until the T'ang dynasty (A.D. 618-907) did the art of acting acquire its concrete form. "But already in the sixth century Indian music became so popular that an imperial decree tried in vain to proscribe it. Now, drama and dance as we know it from the *Nāṭyāśāstra* having vital connexion with music was in all likelihood introduced from India into China at the latest in the sixth century. And during the T'ang period the Chinese

drama reached the climax of its glory and that the satirical dialogue, lacking before that time, began to appear in drama of the period, seems to have been due to the influence of the Indian *Prahasanas* (low comedies).

IN KOREA. About the drama of Korea we do not have any definite information. But from the fact that many culture-products of India have passed from China to Korea, it seems likely that this was not different in case of drama. In the 7th century, Gigaku, a sort of mask-dance was introduced into Japan from Korea, and the same was probably the case with the Bugaku plays. These two according to Japanese writers had some connexion with the ancient Indian drama.[11]

IN JAPAN. It has been shown above that Gigaku dance and Bugaku plays of Japan had connexion with India. These two in course of time gave rise to Kabuki and No plays which betray some affinity with the ancient Indian drama. But in the absence of a detailed enquiry it cannot said to what extent they have been influenced by the Indian drama, though about the question of influence there may not be any serious doubt.[12]

11 Shegetoshi Kawatake, *Development of the Japanese Theatre*, Tokyo, 1935, p. 12.

12 *Ibid.*

Burmese Dance and Drama[1]

For a positive evidence regarding the connexion of the Pwe dance with India, one has only to look up to the ancient Burmese history. In 802 A.D. one deputation of Pyu (Chinese P'iao) from the Northern Burma accompanied a mission to the Chinese court at Asi-nan-fu.[2] It was led by Shunant'o, the son of the chief of Nanchao. The Pyu retinue sang before the Chinese Emperor songs containing Sanskrit words and rendered them into dance. This performance which according to the historians was a Pwe dance, pleased the Chinese Emperor so much that he bestowed to Shunant'o and his father, minor offices of the court. The foregoing account occurring in the Chinese official annals and in a poem written by some imperial secretary, shows clearly how deeply the Indian music and Nāṭya influenced the culture of North Burma in the 8th century. The extent of this influence cannot surely be explained except on the assumption of a long past history behind it.[3]

Being allied to the ancient Indian Nāṭya, the dances of Burma are not what are usually understood by the word. They may better be called 'ballet' a term by which some western writers have charac-

1 *Burmese Drama* by Maung Htin Aung, London, 1947 escaped my notice when this article was written. This treats the modern Burmese drama in details. But the author's treatment of the early Burmese drama is very meagre. It seems that according to this author's view such drama was non-existent. In spite of this, his work contains valuable hints about the early history of Burmese drama which may well be pre-Christian in origin. I shall take up the subject later on.

2 G. E. Harvey, History of Burma, London, 1925, pp. 13-15.

3 According to Maung Htin Aung "the Kingdom of Prome in lower Burma was flourishing as a civilized state by about the fifth century before Christ. A few centuries earlier the first kingdom, named Tagaung, in upper Burma, is said to have been founded by a king who came overland from India. That kingdom was destroyed, but was revived and restored by another king from India during the life time of the Buddha" (Burmese Drama, p. ix). This account taken from early Burmese chronicles can be accepted as reliable though G. E. Harvey thinks otherwise.

terised them. Even if this art taken from India has undergone some changes due to Burma's own native genius, its original character will be still easily recognisable to a student of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. The Pwe dances connected with the Nat cult which may not be later than the 7th century, will further demonstrate the affinity of such dances with the Indian Nāṭya. It will be very convenient to take up the most popular Thagya Nat in this connexion. Some specialists have identified him with Indra, under the name of Śakra. From them we learn that according to an old Burmese work named the *Mahagita Medanigyyan* (Skt. *Mahāgīta Medinī*—?), Thagya Nat is the representative of the kind of the Thagya, and lives on the summit of Myimmo-daung (=Mount Meru). He calls himself the king of the Four *dvīpas* surrounded by the Seven Encircling Seas and the Seven Ranges of Mountains (of the Puranic Cosmogony of India). And like the Vedic god Varuṇa, he watches over the good and the bad, rewarding the former and punishing the latter.[4] The well-known Water Festival held in the Burmese New Year's Day when Thagya Nat is supposed to make his annual visit to the earth from heaven, may be considered a variant of the *Indra-dhvaja* festival which is sometimes referred to in the ancient Sanskrit literature. Dances and songs in honour of the rains or the rain-god (e.g. the *Kājarī*) are still in vogue in some parts of North India. During the festival of Thagya Nat, a large shed is erected and in it various kinds of plays are acted. While these are going on, enter the women worshippers of the Nat, all dressed alike as men in ornamental bordered waist-cloths, broad-sleeved jackets, and white shawls thrown over their shoulders, with shells in the right hand and young sprigs of the *thabye* in the left. They step forward in a graceful manner, and standing upright chant the *Nat-than* which consists of a description of Thagya Nat by himself. Then the music strikes up, and the ceremony concludes with the vigorous dancing of the Nat-inspired women. Considering all these facts, it may be permissible to look for the origin of the Pwe dance in India which had

4 Mung Htin Aung does not mention these facts when he writes of the Nats.

dances and dramas as early as the beginning of the first millennium before Christ, if not earlier still.

The original connexion between the Burmese drama and the Indian Nāṭya becomes clearer still, when we come to later specimens of the former. In spite of its early and long dependence on the religious ritual, the Burmese drama gradually moved towards assuming a distinct art-form of the secular type. But still it is possibly not a drama of the western kind. Just like its ancient Indian prototype (the Nāṭya) it consists of "dancing, singing and instrumental music the modulation of the vocal expression being much more subtle and intense than the expression of the features, while gesture is restricted to the conventional postures of dance." And as in the major types of the ancient Indian plays, the usual scene of the Burmese drama is the palace, and the members are the royalty and their upper and the lower subordinates. The heroes and the heroines are princes and princesses, their retinue, courtiers and the court-jester (Skt. Vidūṣaka). In some of these as in the Indian Nāṭya, sometimes demigods or nymphs also appear in principal roles.

The stages and the sceneries of the Burmese drama are very simple and commonplace. In this regard it is comparable to the modern Indian folk-dramas like the Bengali *yātrā* which goes back to the ancient Indian Nāṭya. The Burmese temporary theatre is built with bamboo, and its roof is covered with straw or dried grass, but the interior of it is covered with gorgeously coloured silk and other stuffs. The stage of the theatre is the ground generally spread with mats, and occupies its centre. On the two sides and in the front, bamboo platforms are raised for the more distinguished spectators. The ordinary people squat on the mats spread over places kept vacant between the stage and the bamboo platforms. The stage is illumined with lights consisting of earthen pots full of cotton-seeds soaked in petroleum and occasionally replenished with oil. The orchestra is accommodated in the back portion of the stage, and behind it is the tiring room where the actors and actresses take up or change their costumes.

As in the ancient Indian plays of major types, religious or moral ideas underlie most of the Burmese dramas. A number of (Buddhist) Jātaka stories such as, Vessāntara, Mahosadha and Janaka, have been

given dramatic form. Sometimes plays are written about the heroes of the Burmese history. The conquest of Thaton by Anawrahta, an 11th century king of Pagan, is one of such themes very popular among the Burmese playwrights. Sometimes the Indian *Rāmāyaṇa* in an adapted form, has been laid under contribution by them. Ancient Indian fairy tales are also made the basis of plays.[5] One such work has appeared in Indian literature in no less than three distinct versions.[6]

5 One such play treats of a story which was perhaps the original popular tale on which the Kinnarī Jataka in the Mahāvastu was based. The fact that the non-Buddhist version of a Buddhist Jātaka furnishes the theme of a popular play in Burma probably shows the antiquity of the migration of this tale. This may be said to strengthen our confidence in the early Burmese chronicles according to which Indo-Burmese cultural relation began from before the time of the Buddha. For the play referred to above see *the Indo-Asian Culture*, vol. I, 1953 pp. 270ff.

6 See *Indo-Asian Culture* (*loc. cit*).

Sinhalese Dance and Drama

About twenty five years ago Pertold[1] made a very searching study of this subject and tried in course of his article to explain a few terms and ideas related to Sinhalese dances by referring them to their Indian counterparts. From these and from some more parallelisms discovered by the present writer, it will appear that a workable hypothesis on the origin and antiquity of the ceremonial dances of Ceylon may be made, though the above-mentioned writer repeatedly opined that these were of unknown origin and their antiquity could not be pushed beyond the last few centuries.

These dances which are pretty numerous, fall into two principal groups: (*i*) those using no masks and practised by the Väddas, *e. g.*, *Gale Yakā* ceremony and *Kalagedi Nāṭima* and (*ii*) those using masks of varying character and practised by the Sinhalese, *e. g.*, *Kolam Nāṭima*, *Yakun Nāṭima* and *Gara Yakum Nāṭima*.

The first thing that strikes an Indian in connexion with the non-mask dances of the Väddas, is the word *nāṭima* which is evidently derived from the same Indian root *naṭ* (Skt.) as the word *nāṭya* (dance-drama). And no less striking is the Vädda word *Yaka* (*Yaku*) used in the names of demigods in whose honour the ceremonial dances of the Väddas, are performed. Now the word *Yaka* with its variant *Yaku* appears to be cognate with Sinhalese *Yakā* which is derived from Pali. *Yakkho* (Skt. *Yakṣa*). Some authorities are for attributing a different meaning to the Vädda *Yaka* and the Sinhalese *Yakā*. But in view of the fact that the Vädda dialect is "to a great extent of the colloquial Sinhalese type" their fancied difference seems to be inadmissible. And the Vädda *Yaka* (*Yaku*) related to the Sinhalese *Yakā* like the Skt. *Yakṣa* means, besides an attendant of *Kubera* (*Vaiśravaṇa*) a minor god dwelling in the Himalayas.

Of the various *Yakas* of the Väddas, *Dunna Yaka* (the god of bow)

1 The Ceremonial Dances of the Sinhalese, Parts I-III, *Acbiv Orientalni*, Vol. II (1930), pp. 108ff. 208ff., 385ff.

may be equated to *dhanvā*[2]*-yakṣa* and *Bambura Yaka* (the short-curled god) to *Baṅkuda*[3] *Yakṣa*. *Kandē Yaka* (god of the arrow-head) has been rightly traced to *Skanda Yakṣa* (=*Kārtikeya*, the Hindu god of War).

The connexion of *Rahu Yaka* with the demon *Rāhu* of Indian mythology is too obvious to require any proof. *No Yaka* (ancestor spirit) probably goes back to *Jñāti Yaksa*. The Sinhalese ceremonial dances connected with the ancestor-worship seem to have a family likeness to the dance and music prescribed in the *Kātyāyana Śrauta Sūtra* (21-3-11) as a part of the *pitṛmedha* rites of the early Indo-Aryans.

That the ceremonial dances of the Väddas are all intended to accompany offerings to the *Yakas*, is comparable to dances and music which form an indispensable part of the elaborate *pūjā* offered to Hindu gods such as Śiva, Durgā, Caṇḍī, and Manasā.

Terms like *mässa*, *kiri-koraha* and *maḍuva* related to the ceremonial dances seem also to go back to Indian originals. *Maḍuva* has been connected by Pertold with Skt. *maṇḍapa*. *Mässa* may similarly be connected with Skt. *mañca*, and *kiri-koraha* with *kṣīra-kaṭāha*. Of these two, *mässa* is a kind of scaffold made of sticks, resembling a table over which sometimes a kind of roof is erected; and *kiri-koraha* is a large earthen pan used for cooking rice with cocoanut milk (*kṣīra*). The word *avudaya*, the name of a ceremonial spear, may be connected with the Skt. *āyudhaka* (weapon). The weapon called *vela* (a spear) used in the ceremony of *Kande Yaka* may be related to the Skt. *bhalla* (spear). The name of the ceremony called *Gale Yak-maḍuve bat pujāva* may be translated into Skt. as *giri-yakṣa-maṇḍapa-bhakta-pūjā*.

The rock of the hill deity which is worshipped by the Väddas under the name *Gale Yaka*, is very interesting. This deity is worshipped also under different forms such as (1) *Galē deviyā*, (2) *Galē baṇḍāra*, (3) *Kandē baṇḍāra*, and (4) *Kumaragalē Postima baṇḍāra*. According to Pertold the third name means "the chief of the hills".

2 *Dhanvā*, Skt. is available only at the end of a compound, *e.g.*, *adhijya-dhanvā*

3 *Baṅkuḍa* is a Pkt. word.

This reminds us of the Indian *Girīśa* the lord of the hills (Śiva). The first name *Galē deviyā Yaka* may be translated as *Giri-deva-Yakṣa*. The name *Kandë baṇḍāra* has, according to Pertold, its counterpart in Skt. *Skanda-Kumara*. This deity like his Indian counterpart rides a peacock. But the resemblance ends there. Sinhalese *Kandē baṇḍāra* is a hill deity while Indian *Skanda* is the son of a hill deity (Śiva).

The masked dances of the Sinhalese however seem to show more unmistakable connexion with the Indian Nāṭya. The *Kolam-nāṭima* which is the most well-known of such dances, has some very striking points of similarity with the Sanskrit dramas. The plot or rather the loosely connected basic incidents depicted in the *Kola-nāṭima*, is as follows :

The chief queen of *Pilat*, the king of *Dambḍe Deewa* (=*Jambudvīpa*) became *enceinte* and was attacked by *doḷa-duk* (= *dohala-dukkha* = Skt. *dohada-duḥkha*) *i.e.* the peculiar craving natural during the state of pregnancy. The object of this craving was a longing to see a masked dance unknown in the country. The king was much puzzled at this; but he called his ministers and asked their advice. The ministers too did not know how to advise the king, and they trembled in his presence for fear of punishment. This made the king very angry, and for this he went to bed without taking any food. This accidental fast earned for the king some religious merit, due to which a goddess took pity on him. She went to the god Indra (*Sakka* =*Sakra*) and informed him humbly of the trouble of the king. Indra heard her request with attention and assured her of his help to the king. He at once summoned Vesamuṇi (=*Vaiśravaṇa*) or the god of treasures and ordered him to make suitable masks for use in dance. Vesamuṇi lost no time and set to work in the king's garden. There he cut down sandal wood and carved out a great number of masks representing different characters. These were laid scattered by him in several places in the garden together with a manuscript which gave the text to be recited at the time of the dances.

Next morning the king's gardener was surprised to see all these masks and he was even alarmed at the frightening appearance of some of them. But he quickly ran to the palace and informed the king of the incident. Then the king with his courtiers went to see what had

taken place in the garden overnight, and he at once realised the importance of the miraculous find. He then ordered the masks to be carried to the palace and to prepare a performance of masked dance on the next day with the accompaniment of chanting the text in Ms. for satisfying the craving of the queen.

This in brief is the story behind the *Kola-näṭima*. Its performance too betrays more or less clearly its affinity with the old Sanskrit *rūpakas* (dramas). It begins with an invocation of gods, (Skt. *maṅgalācaraṇa*) which chanted by an unmasked dancer is a kind of prologue (Skt. *prastāvanā*). In it the chief characters and the substance of the plot are mentioned. The king, queen and the Brahmin ministers (Sinhalese *amatiyā* or *ämättaya*, Skt. *amātya*) are the same persons as in ancient Indian plays. But unlike these plays the *Kolam-näṭima* does not develop its plot by means of the *darmatis personae*. Different scenes are connected with one another by the narrator who introduces every new character coming upon the stage. This narrator is generally known in Sinhalese as *tora-taru-kathākārayā* or the interpreter of affairs. The second half of this name, *i.e.*, *kathākārayā* may be translated into Skt. as *kathākāraka* (maker of the story). His duty is to explain the characters coming, their acting and their words in prose. Though he is indispensably connected with the performance, he is no actor of the story, but an outsider like the spectators. In this respect he exactly resembles the *sūtradhāra* in the Assamese *Aṅkīyā nāṭ*[4] which in all likelihood traces its origin to some kind of long lost dramatic spectacle from which the Skt. drama developed. As the classical Skt. drama assumed its stereotyped from not later than the first century A. D. the peculiar type of *Sūtradhāra* available in the *Aṅkīyā nāṭ* or the *Kolam-näṭima* may be assumed to be of pre-Christian origin.

The leading characters in the performance of the *Kolam-näṭima* are the king and the queen. The king is characterised by his gorgeous dress and by a big mask. This mask is very carefully carved and painted. The distinguishing mark of this mask is the halo round its crown. In this respect it resembles very much the crown of the king in the *Kathakali* dance.

4 A collection of 15 plays (16th century) published by B. K. Barua under the name *Aṅkīyā Nāṭ*, (Gauhati, 1940). In the *Aṅkīyā nāṭ*, too masks are used.

The use of masks in the *Kolam näṭima* also may be said to point to its Indian affinity, for masks were used in the Indian *nāṭya* as early as the beginning of the Christian era, if not earlier still. In the *Nāṭyaśāstra*[5] (c. 200 A.C.) there are more or less elaborate rules about the making and uses of the masks (see Ch. XXII. 170-180; 128-143).

As in the cases of masks mentioned in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the Sinhalese masks too are distinguished by the head-gears attached to them, e.g. when turbans are attached to them they are to represent ministers (*amātya*) and a mask with a short-sized crown is meant for a prince (*kumāra*.) The colours of Sinhalese masks too are sometimes comparable to the colours prescribed in the Nś. for painting different characters in a play, e.g. white is used in Sinhalese masks to paint the faces of a number of gods and goddesses and other celestial beings while the Nś. prescribes that gods like Soma (Moon), Śukra, Bṛhaspati, Varuṇa the Ocean, the mountain Himālaya and the river Gaṅgā should be painted white. In the Sinhalese masks blue is the colour of the faces of foreign demons, while the Nś. has a rule for painting Daityas, Dānavas, Rākṣasas, Guhyakas and Piśācas in blue.

Another evidence of the connection of the *Kolam-näṭima* with the ancient Skt. plays, is probably the blessing pronounced by some character at the end of the performance. As this blessing relates to all the people present, it has a very strong similarity with the *Bharata-vākya* which brings a Skt. play to a close.

5 The *Nāṭyaśāstra* (chapters I-XXVII) translation published by the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 1951.

CAMBODIAN DANCE AND DRAMA

For the study of Cambodian dance and drama, we have valuable materials. In the bas-reliefs of the Bayon (Angkor Thom) there are scenes from the life of a dancer such as her bath, hairdressing, massage and exercises.[1] It is evident that such a dancer was a *devadāsī*[2] whose original function was that of a priestess. The scenes depicted in this ancient monument are still observable in the life of dancers attached to the royal palace of Cambodia.[3] And gestures and postures in the dance-scenes of the bas-reliefs are still to be seen in the dances performed by artistes of the royal palace. These have not undergone any perceptible change during the one thousand years that elapsed after the Angkor Thom had been built. But it cannot be said that their history began only in that century. For the first Indians who gave the land the name Kambuja did in all probability come towards the beginning of the first century A.D.[4] The first Kauṇḍinya who became king of Funan (present day Cambodia, Thailand and some adjoining regions) came also about this time.[5] It may be assumed that from the very beginning they introduced in the lands of their adoption, different elements of Indian culture among which dance and drama occupied an important place. That the Cambodian drama is of the pre-classical type of the Indian *nāṭya*[6], can be explained only on this assumption. During the reign of the kings of the dynasty of the second Kauṇḍinya (5th and 6th century) Funan advanced very much in culture, and

1 See Jeanne Cuisinier, *Danses cambodgienne*, 2 me edition, 1956, p. 31 This is a revised and slightly enlarged form of the original work written by Samdach Chaufea Thiounn, once prime minister of Cambodia. It is illustrated. See also G. Groslier. *Danseuses cambodgiennes anciennes et modernes*, Paris, 1913.

2 Some writers for reasons best known to them have taken this word to mean 'a temple harlot.'

3 See Jeanne Cuisinier, *op. cit*, p. 31.

4 P. C. Bagchi, *Bhārat-o-Indo-cīn* (Bengali), p. 9.

5 *ibid* , p. 7.

6 See the Introduction to the Translation of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* by M. Ghosh. Calcutta, 1951.

civilization and was considerably Indianized, and education made great progress there through cultivation of the Sanskrit language and literature.[7] Hence it may be permissible to assume that the more popular aspects of Indian culture such as dance and drama, connected with the worship of Śiva who had then many votaries there, took root at that remote period in the region known now as Cambodia. So it may be said that the dance and drama of this country have a history of at least fifteen centuries if not more. But they had their ups and downs. There were times when these arts if not completely abandoned, were at least neglected.[8] It was particularly in the sixteenth century when the kingdom of Cambodia was very much weakened, these arts declined. In this century these arts were assiduously cultivated by the Siamese. But in the seventeenth century Cambodians again took up their dance and drama with fresh enthusiasm. This probably led some writers to opine that the Cambodians received their dance and drama from the Siamese.[9]

Curiously enough, some Buddhist monasteries played an important role in saving there arts from extinction. They preserved manuscripts of the *Rāmāyaṇa* which furnished themes for plays; and the troupes of dancers were formed from among the lay pupils of monks for the diversion of children as well as monks themselves. It has been said that the role which the monasteries played in this connection was rather passive, for the rules of descipline prohibited their taking an active part in these arts.[10] One cannot however be sure on this point. For, was not Aśvaghoṣa the famous Mahāyāna teacher and poet a playwright and musician? And about the past Mahāyāna influence in Cambodia there is not any doubt. But whatever may be the vicissitudes which dance and drama suffered in this land, it has been able to retain these arts during its pretty long history almost without any major changes. The general agreement which one discovers between these and the *nāṭya* described in *Śāstra* supposed to have been compiled

7 P. C. Bagchi, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.
8 See Jeanne Cuisinier, *op. cit.*, p. 31.
9 Cf. G. Knosp, *Le théatre en indo chine* in Anthropos, no. 2 of 1908.
10 See Jeanne Cuisinier, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

by Bharata (circa 200 A.D.) may be considered sufficient evidence in support of such a view. For it is to be remembered that in spite of the great importance of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, it was not the only work on the subject that the ancient India produced. It has already been shown elsewhere[11] how there were numerous Hindu writers on dance, drama and music in ancient times. They in all probability belonged to more schools than one. If our assumption is correct, one is to look for the origin of the Cambodian dance and drama in some lost work on the ancient Indian nāṭya, which represented a school other than that of Bharata.

In spite of all this, a reference to the *Nāṭyaśāstra* in connection with a detailed study of the Cambodian dance and drama will prove to be of great value. The following aspects of the Cambodian dance and drama have their counterpart in the arts described in the *Nāṭya-śāstra*[12]:

(1) The Cambodian dancers have to undergo a religious training under qualified teachers, in various gestures, postures and foot movements.

(2) Some gestures depicted in the bas-reliefs of the Bayon (Angkor Thom) and seen in practice in dances of the royal palace are similar to those described in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. They are: *añjali, patāka, ardhacandra, muṣṭi, bharmara, arāla, candrakalā and kapota.*

(3) Different kinds of gait for different types of characters are followed by music of different tempo.

(4) The use of mask by some characters.

(5) The use of different colours in painting the different types of characters.

11 See Introduction to the translation of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* by M. Ghosh.

12 As this article was written in Cambodia where the NŚ. is its translation was not available no reference to these works could be given.

SOME OTHER BOOKS

by

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NĀṬYAŚĀSTRA (*English Translation*)
Asiatic Society

ABHINAYADARPAṆA (*Introduction, Translation and Notes*)
Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay

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CATURAṄGADĪPIKĀ (*Introduction, Text, Translation and Notes*)
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